



1937

# Realism in English Renaissance Fiction

Helen Stokes

*Loyola University Chicago*

---

## Recommended Citation

Stokes, Helen, "Realism in English Renaissance Fiction" (1937). *Master's Theses*. Paper 697.  
[http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_theses/697](http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/697)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).  
Copyright © 1937 Helen Stokes

REALISM IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE FICTION

Helen Stokes  
Loyola University  
August, 1937.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ii
Chapter I—The Sources of Realism in Elizabethan Fiction; The Traditional Materials of the Middle Ages; The Influences Exerted by Other European Literatures; The "Ship of Fools"	1
Chapter II—The Popular Satires; The Fool Literature; Beggar Materials; Testaments; Satires—On—Women	28
Chapter III—The Matter of the Jest—Book; <u>A C. Mery Talys;</u> <u>Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres;</u> <u>Howleglass; Merie Tales of Master Skelton; The Geystes</u> <u>of Skoggan. The Picaresque Novel: Nashe's The Unfor-</u> <u>tunate Traveller, or The Life of Jacke Wilton</u>	57
Chapter IV—The Connie-Catching Pamphlets	80
Chapter V—The Literature of the Newly-Rising Bourgeois Class; The Changing Social Trends Giving Rise to This Class; The Social Materials of Greene, Nashe, Deloney, Dekker and Massinger	98
Chapter VI—Conclusion: Realism As an Element in the New Art of the Novel	137
Bibliography	
Primary Sources	140
Secondary Sources	142

## PREFACE

When one thinks of the English Renaissance, a picture of the typical courtier with his accoutrements, habits, ideas, and manners presents itself to the mind. One thinks of Lyly's Euphues, Sidney's Arcadia, pastoral and courtly romances and poetry. But there was present, although submerged, a strong self-conscious middle-class emerging from the ruins of feudalism. And just as the taste of a chivalrous aristocracy was delighted with romances, that of the people found its gratification in tales depicting the common incidents and humors of the lives they themselves lived.

Their stories were contained in earlier medieval collections like the Gesta Romanorum, the Alphabetum Narrationum, the historical ballads and moral fables, all of which not only amused the dull, unlettered people but instructed them as well by illustrating scenes and actions in which they could visualize themselves taking part. But by the beginning of the sixteenth century these early forms of realistic story were developing into more extended fictional types, in which the forerunners of the artistic tale and novel of modern times may be discerned.

My purpose has been in this study to define the realistic elements in that fiction, and to show their conscious growth and development through contact and association with the lives and social conditions of the masses, until we have in the person of Thomas Deloney, writing in the last decade of the sixteenth century, the fully-developed chronicler and eulogist of this new, self-conscious, thriving, middle-class group.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SOURCES OF REALISM IN ELIZABETHAN FICTION; THE TRADITIONAL MATERIALS OF THE MIDDLE AGES; THE INFLUENCES EXERTED BY OTHER EUROPEAN LITERATURES; THE "SHIP OF FOOLS".

The two main sources of influence from which Elizabethan and Tudor fiction evolved were the court and the people. The court was easily the supreme element in national life, and one great aim of contemporary letters became that of supplying the courtiers' needs.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, a strong self-conscious middle class was emerging from the ruins of feudalism, and the commons were becoming alive to the interests of their class. Now, the romantic literature of the Renaissance was in origin, aim, and character an aristocratic literature. Its themes were war and love, the most approved occupations of the military caste, or the passages with beings of another world, which were the happy or evil lot of individuals born of high and perhaps mysterious lineage.<sup>2</sup> Of the common people there was rarely a glimpse; they stood in a very distant background. For the romancers were not writing about them or for them, but for the pleasure of court and castle. Even in the rude versions which seem to have been prepared for humble circles the heroes were still kings, barons, and knights, and the heroines ladies of race or of fairyland.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Atkins, J. W. H., "Elizabethan Prose Fiction", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup>Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. I, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

But as the taste of a chivalrous aristocracy was naturally delighted with romances, that not only led the imagination through a series of adventures, but presented a mirror of sentiments to which they themselves pretended; that of mankind in general found its gratification, sometimes in tales of home growth, or in those transplanted from the East, whether serious or amusing, such as the Gesta Romanorum, the Dolopathos, the Decameron (certainly the most celebrated and best written of these inventions) and the Pecorone; sometimes in historical ballads or in moral fables,<sup>4</sup> a favorite style of composition especially with the Teutonic nations; sometimes again in legends of saints and the popular demonology of the age.<sup>4</sup>

The middle classes entered on the sixteenth century with the same tastes as their forefathers—a love of ballads and fables, together with the satirical humor and practical sagacity which had always found expression in a literature quite separate from both monastic culture and the civilization of the court.<sup>5</sup> A fund of unexhausted assets remained over from the earlier time. It consisted, not of the tarnished relics of medieval romance, but of the anecdotes and domestic stories, the jests and skits which were the English equivalent of the fabliaux. These showed that even dull, or at any rate unlettered, people could be interested in the common incidents and humors of the lives they themselves lived—an interest which was to persist in humble kinds of fiction.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Hallam, Henry, Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries, 4 vols., Vol. I, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup>Routh, Harold V., "The Progress of Social Literature in Tudor Times", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup>Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. II, p. 12.

Long before the close of the Middle Ages an utterly different kind of fiction had begun to appear, first in Latin for delivery in the vernacular, and then from the fourteenth century onwards in collections ready translated. This literature for the ordinary people was centered a great deal more in situations and incidents in which they might conceive themselves taking part. Now, it was above all things necessary that the stories in question should not only amuse, but should really strike home, for they were stories with a purpose—a didactic purpose.<sup>7</sup> They were invented, or reported, or borrowed from all accessible sources, expressly for the use of the clergy in illustrating points in their sermons, or to rivet the attention of a listless or dull-witted congregation and impart a moral or doctrinal lesson at the same time.<sup>8</sup> Given the story, the homilist pointed out the application, though in most of the collections this essential work was done for him beforehand, leaving, however, plenty of scope to those with a vivid sense of reality to clothe the bare skeleton with flesh and blood. In time such application of stories to everyday life had the natural result of promoting the accumulation, and then the invention, of stories of daily life. The tale told by the priest for the edification of his flock had more perhaps to do with establishing closer relations between story-telling and actuality than had all the romances put together.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. I, p. 260.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

This didactic use of tales, by the method of direct application or by way of parable or allegory, comes down from time immemorial. Likewise the fable, such as those in the bestiaries, served a serious utilitarian purpose in the Middle Ages: it was the handiest instrument of moral education. Out of such materials at first, and later on with additions from history, tradition, Holy Scripture, monkish legend and popular hearsay, were compiled regular manuals for the pulpit, books of examples, consisting chiefly of entertaining stories, each accompanied by the dry bones of an ethical interpretation, which the preacher adapted to the tenor of his discourse.<sup>10</sup> The English Cistercian, Odo de Ceriton, was responsible for a series of fables in Latin prose, all carefully adapted for moralistic teaching, which, it is interesting to notice, was indebted to the great continental beast epic of Reynard the Fox, as appears from the names of some of his animals—Reynard, Isengrin, and Teburgus. The great allegorical composition called Roman de Renard, which formed thirty-two branches springing from the same trunk, but without forming a connected and homogeneous whole, was undoubtedly composed by different authors, and at different epochs, according to the requirements of the jugglers who recited or sang it in the towns and villages, and who thus acquired for it a very widespreading popularity.<sup>11</sup>

But the origin of this story, long sought by literary critics, recedes as they prolong the inquiry into greater depths of antiquity. It was supposed to have been written, or at least first published, in German rhyme by Henry of Alnaar, in 1498; but earlier editions in the Flemish language have

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>11</sup> LaCroix, Paul, Science and Literature in the Middle Ages and at the Period of the Renaissance, p. 428.



since been discovered. It has been found in French verse by Gielee, of Lille, near the end, and in French prose by Peter of St. Cloud near the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> But though we thus bring the story to France, where it became so popular as to change the very name of the principal animal, which had been called goupil till the fourteenth century, when it assumed from the hero of the tale the name of Renard, there seems every reason to believe that it is of Germanic origin; and, according to a conjecture once thought probable, a certain Reinard of Lorraine, famous for his vulpine qualities in the ninth century, suggested the name to some unknown fabulist of the empire.<sup>13</sup> The middle and lower classes took a lively interest in the amusing and satirical adventures of Master Renard and his uncle, Ysengrin. In this great beast epic, Aesopic fable had been expanded, elaborated, and enriched, until it embraced the whole drama of contemporary life, at least as it appeared to as astute and unromantic bourgeois.

The fourteenth century saw a number of such moralistic and didactic compilations, the most important of which in literary history was the Gesta Romanorum, which probably originated in its Latin form in England, and was translated into the vernacular during the reign of Henry VI.<sup>14</sup> Probably the nucleus for this collection was an assortment of tales from the minor classical writers and from Latin chroniclers; to which was added tale after tale of the most diverse origin and subject—any fairy story, fable, or legend, in short, that could be forced by any desperate feat of manipulation to point an

<sup>12</sup>Hallam, Henry, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 261.

acceptable lesson.<sup>15</sup> The old stories retold in the Gesta Romanorum are mostly spoiled as pieces of significant narrative, and the new are certainly no better; they are curious reflections of the medieval mind, a clear stage in the movement towards a deeper vitality in fiction, but in themselves they are unpleasing.<sup>16</sup> In the disposition to see the moral side of everything, inherited from Anglo-Saxon forefathers, the allegory found a congenial soil. No tale was so stubborn or so intrinsically immoral that the expert casuist could not deduce an edifying lesson in conduct or doctrine. On the whole it must be said what is euphemistically known as worldly wisdom holds a more honorable place in the ethics of the Gesta Romanorum, than does any loftier and more altruistic theory of conduct. But a collection that had the large embrace of the Gesta, and yet ignored nearly all the subjects handled by the romancers, marked a new epoch in the development of fiction.<sup>17</sup>

Of the same nature as the Gesta Romanorum was the Alphabetum Narrationum, by the great Dominican preacher, Etienne de Besancon, of which an English translation was made in the fifteenth century. In this there is a larger intermixture of Eastern stories, transmitted through Petrus Alphonsus and other gleaners, and also of entertaining and far from edifying tales of the fabliau type. But the object is the same—ethical instruction—and the incongruity of tale and application just as ludicrous.<sup>18</sup> To France we owe our earliest debt in this regard, for in that country the fabliau was born. The lesser *trouveurs*, those who may, perhaps, have been subject to the influence of the

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 266.

<sup>17</sup> Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 270.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

troubadours borrowed their lays from the singers of Brittany, and were the inventors of the fabliaux, the best, but at the same time, the most immoral, of the productions of the trouveurs and jugglers. Many of these tales are masterpieces of wit and insinuation and abound in strokes of humor, and in most of the works it is easy to trace the ancient sources from which the authors borrowed their generally indecent subjects of song.<sup>19</sup> Others, however, were of their own invention, and the latter were not the least immoral, for the trouveurs of the people were, for the most part, men of dissolute life. From France, this amusing tale in verse, relating deeds of real or possible adventure in ordinary life, was borrowed by the Novellieri of Italy. It was taken up and developed by Boccaccio, and both directly from France and indirectly through Italy it made its way into the general stock of European narrative material.<sup>20</sup>

Of the English collections, Chaucer's are the best. The rude thirteenth century Land of Cockaigne and the Miller of Abingdon of later date are not to be compared with the Reeve's tale, or those put into the mouth of the Shipman and the Manciple; and there are no English prose tales of that era approaching these.<sup>21</sup> But till long after Chaucer's day the stories of France flourished almost as well on English soil, whether read and sung in the original French or adapted—like the Romance of Alexander or the Romance of the Rose—in English dress. Chaucer himself translated the Roman de la Rose, and otherwise made free use of the French material, including the fabliaux. His

---

<sup>19</sup>LaCroix, Paul, op. cit., p. 426.

<sup>20</sup>Tucker, T. G., The Foreign Debt of English Literature, p. 149.

<sup>21</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 286.

contemporary, Gower, is almost wholly a copier of the French, and, during all the epoch which is called the Chaucerian, authors known and nameless used the stock of medieval France as freely and as monotonously as the French themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Although many of the heavier didactic *pièces* of that day can be assigned to earlier writers of more or less repute, the anecdote, the fable, and the fabliaux are, in a very large proportion, of communal origin. They were bandied about from mouth to mouth, from nation to nation, from one collection to another, and <sup>in</sup> the course of this ceaseless transit underwent continual transformation without entirely losing their recognizable lineaments.<sup>23</sup>

While these magazines of all kinds of stories were being compiled for homiletic purposes, the stories of saints which had hitherto existed in separate lives were being gathered together in collections serving much the same ends. But there was a reaction from all this didactic material, although in much of the work the moral was obtrusively dragged in, as an excuse for obscenity of a most degenerate type. One of the earliest to treat with quiet irreverence and incredulity the pious asseverations of the legendaries, as well as the high-flown sentiments and wild inventions of the romancers, was the author of The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, of which the oldest French manuscript dates from 1371, and the first English translation from about the end of the century. Two, or possibly three, English versions were in circulation during the fifteenth century. No doubt the author was the Liegeois, Jean

---

<sup>22</sup>Tucker, T. G., op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>23</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 305.

d'Outremeuse; but the hero and professed autobiographer was an Englishman.<sup>24</sup> The book was a product of the country and of the bourgeois classes for whom the anti-romantic fabliaux had been written.

From this stream of medieval literature of a realistic type have also developed the popular satires of Elizabethan and later times. Probably the greatest subject of popular criticism during the Middle Ages was women. The songs warning young men to avoid matrimony belong to the satires against women, a poetical tradition which was one of the contributions of France. In no class of songs is the esprit gaulois more evident. That sly distrust of woman which early insinuated itself into French romances, and which grew bolder and harsher as the ideals of the Renaissance encroached upon medievalism, in the poetry of the common people found expression in blunt and broad satire.<sup>25</sup> Several different types of these satires are to be recognized, but the style best designed to endear itself to the popular taste was that used in little dramatic narratives of the Punch and Judy school of comedy, in which the poet tells the story of a family quarrel, wherein the good man is invariably worsted by his muscular and shrewish helpmate.<sup>26</sup> This broad farce finds its dramatic counterpart in those brawling scenes in the mystery plays which pleased the rude populace.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>25</sup> Padelford, Frederick Morgan, "Transition English Song Collections", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. II, p. 437.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 438.

In another class of satires, women are praised ironically, the refrain serving to turn the apparent praise to dispraise. And yet another type of satire against women is pretentious and artificial. It consists in proposing impossible phenomena; and then concluding that when such phenomena actually exist, women will be faithful. But these poems are scarcely more than translations of the many French poems of the same kind.<sup>27</sup> A merry song that links the convivial poem to the satire on women is the narrative of the gay gossips who hie themselves to the tavern, and there, tucked away, discuss their husbands.

This type is closely allied to the great ballad store of the commoners. There seem to have been always singers who made ballads for the people. On account of its obscure origin and its oral transmission, the ballad is always the most difficult of literary subjects. Professor Long makes three helpful suggestions: ballads were produced continually in England from Anglo-Saxon times until the seventeenth century; for centuries they were the only really popular literature; and in ballads alone one is able to understand the common people.<sup>28</sup> The tales centering about Robin Hood, which gradually collected into the Geste of Robin Hood, give us a realistic view of the backgrounds of the English common folk. An intense hatred of shams and injustice lurks in every song; but the hatred is saved from bitterness by the inherent humor and wild horse-play. Rough, honest chivalry for women, and a generous sharing of plunder with the poor and needy, mark this type of literature of an ignorant

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 439

<sup>28</sup> Long, William J., English Literature, p. 61.

and oppressed people. The Robin Hood tales gave birth to many ballads in the later Tudor period; for the people, caring not at all for the beauty of form, evinced with their naive earnestness much interest in important news of the day—battles and perils at sea, tragic adventures, apparitions, murders, plots, executions, and treasons, and whatever reaches easily the heart of the multitude and passes from there to the lips, transformed into songs.<sup>29</sup>

The outstanding note about most of this material of realistic nature present during the transition from medieval to modern is that rarely, if ever, is it possible to point out the author of a good story; it is usually very difficult to say for certain when, where, or even in what language and country it started on its unending career.<sup>30</sup> But in this transition no genres had more persistent vitality than those of the popular, realistic and satirical fabliaux and of the matter of exempla, allegory, and fable. But for these there would probably at that time have been no fiction of real life whatever.

As we enter the sixteenth century, the era of our study, we note that in Germany to a degree unparalleled elsewhere literature had become plebeian. The decay of the courts in Germany as centers of literary culture had thrown literature into the hands of a bourgeois class, not only itself lacking in the old courtly graciousness and refinement, but indisposed by a century of life and death feuds with the leagued nobility to revive its memory; and the antagonism was heightened by internal revolutions, which put every town in the

<sup>29</sup> Jusserand, J. J., A Literary History of the English People, Vol. II, p. 406.

<sup>30</sup> Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 305.

hands of its least cultivated class. It was a literature of the workshop and the stall, a literature of men habitually familiar to brutality, plain-spoken to grossness, drastic in their ridicule, not without sterling honesty, but wanting in the grace of good manners, in chivalry, in subtle and delicate intellect.<sup>31</sup> It was an epoch of general social disintegration in which few poets but many satirists were born.

Satire was the natural speech of a society where State and Church, noble and citizen, absorbed in private indulgence or in mutual feuds, appeared equally incapable of providing a medicine for the common malady. This fertile field of class antipathies and local jealousies produced a rich harvest of malicious jests.<sup>32</sup> The triumph of lawless unreason, the frail tenure of all the ideal bonds of society, drove every quick and sensitive mind to find relief in derision and despair; and the most characteristic as well as the most famous poem of the age was that in which Sebastian Brandt, resuming with a sterner bias the medieval satire upon all classes summoned the greater part of his contemporaries to the "Ship of Fools". This work translated in the first years of the sixteenth century helped essentially to accelerate the development of English satire.<sup>33</sup> To sum up in a single trait: If the extraordinarily gifted, yet relatively barbarous, Germany of the sixteenth century was in pure literature of any moment for its neighbors, it was chiefly in so far as it made literary capital of its barbarism. Clowns and fools, rogues

---

<sup>31</sup> Herford, Charles H., Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century, Intro., p. xx.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xxi.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xxii.



and necromancers, were, so far as most Englishmen knew, the staple literary product of the German people.<sup>34</sup> No people so successfully cultivated the art of moral and satirical fable. These, in many instances, spread with great favor through Cisalpine Europe.

The most famous of the productions of this kind is the Narrenschiff, or Ship of Fools, by Sebastian Brandt of Strasburg, the first edition of which is referred by Brunet to the year 1494. Its popularity is shown by the fact that it was translated into the leading languages of Europe. It was translated into Latin by Professor Locher, 1497, and imitated in the same language and under the same title by Badius Ascensius, 1507; it also appeared in Dutch and Low German, was twice translated into English, and three times into French; and imitations competed with the original in French, German and Latin.<sup>35</sup> Its popularity is due to the fact that it was the first printed book that treated of contemporary events and living persons, instead of old German battles and French knights. Writing in the last years of the fifteenth century, and himself a loyal though backward pupil of the Humanists, Brandt may be said to have given medieval Fool-literature its last and crowning work. But if he closed an epoch, he also initiated one.

The Narrenschiff gave a fresh stimulus and in some degree a fresh form to vernacular satire both at home and abroad. In England especially a long series of writings, from Barclay and Skelton at the beginning of the century to Tarlton at its close betrayed the direct influence of a book which held

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xxix.

<sup>35</sup> Jamieson, Thomas Hill (editor) The Ship of Fools of Sebastian Brant; translated by Alexander Barclay, Vol. I, Intro., p. ix.

its ground here even more persistently than in Germany. It helped to bridge over the difficult transition from the literature of personified abstractions to that which deals with social types. It helped to substitute the study of actual men and women at first hand for the mere accumulation of conventional traits about an abstract substantive; to turn allegory into narrative and moralities into dramas.<sup>36</sup>

In England, however, Brandt had predecessors, whose influence only in part coincided with his and has to be carefully distinguished from it. This distinction falls chiefly on two Englishmen, the author of the Speculum Stultorum, and the poet who embodied his morose ethics in the Order of Fools.<sup>37</sup> But both differ from Brandt in starting with the notion of a religious fraternity. Wireker, the author of Speculum Stultorum, was a precentor of Canterbury under King John. This places the date of the work at the latest from the outset of the thirteenth century. Two and a half centuries later the Order of Fools is already a commonplace of satire. But the idea was not absolutely new; the theatrical company established at Paris, under the name of Enfants de Sans Souci, as well as the ancient office of jester or fool in our courts and castles implied the same principle of satirizing mankind with ridicule so general, that every man should feel more pleasure from the humiliations of his neighbors than pain from his own.<sup>38</sup> The history of fools in their late medieval incarnations has added interest of picturesqueness,

<sup>36</sup> Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 325.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>38</sup> Hallam, Henry, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 245.

There were fools so dubbed because they failed to conform to the prescription of a popular manual of conduct, fools who failed to attain prosperity under the system of feudal obligations, unworldly fools, fools who were menials, and actors who used the fool's costume for protection in driving home the moral of their satirical plays.

In Lydgate's "Order of Fools" dating from some time near the middle of the fifteenth century, both the gaiety of the fools, their freedom and their ease, and their failure to achieve the proper end of man on earth, or in heaven, are suggested. Unlike the simple Anglo-French lists of follies which preceded it, it is clearly satirical. It combines with its rebuke of folly a recognition of the pleasure of folly. It gives us a satirical picture of society, written in the familiar form of a descriptive list of actions predicated of the fool. It is in the direct line of descent from such French and English didactic pieces as the vernacular Catoes, the lists of follies, or the book of Solomon's wisdom.<sup>39</sup> In tone, however, it is different from these, for it connects with the fool a variety of attitudes according to which he is not purely despicable. It assumes an "order" of fools. It invokes Bacchus and Juno to sponsor the festivities of the order, and further it places the whole order under the patronage of Marcolf, who was not a character to be despised, considering his triumphant history. With this introduction, it is impossible to take too seriously the list of errors that follows, although each stanza reiterates that the fools shall never prosper. The chief fool of

---

<sup>39</sup> Swain, Barbara, Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, p. 51.

all, of course, is still he who neither loves nor fears God; and it is assumed that man's goal is in heaven.

Herford sees Lydgate's poem merely as a dry enumeration of members, wherein the inherent irony of the plan seems dispelled at every moment by an unseasonable earnestness.<sup>40</sup> The description of the sixty-three Fools is without life, being a mere catalogue of isolated traits no where elaborated into a portrait, a sort of index of dangerous persons, as it were, calculated mainly for utility.

The Narrenschiff bears the closest resemblance to Lydgate's poem in plan. In both, a long series of vicious characters are collected and described under the rubric Fool. But the Ship of Fools is not a mere summary of different kinds of "Folly", or an analysis of the characteristics of various "Fools". It is a series of vivid portraits—almost a drama in which a succession of Fools, the crew of a Ship, bound on a mysterious voyage, appeared in person, and delivered each one his characteristic and self portraying speech.<sup>41</sup>

Brandt owed the form and spirit of his satire to the device of the Ship. The old satirical fancy of a "Ship of boon companions" was of purely German invention, and before Brandt, exclusively of German currency.<sup>42</sup> Teichner's Schif der Flust, Jacob van Oestvoren's Blauwe Schute, and Jodocus Gallus' Monopolium des Lichtschiffes all had in common, with different shades of emphasis, the representation of a crew of ruined revellers and spendthrifts.

<sup>40</sup> Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

A satirical device of this kind evidently came of the same stock as the "Land of Cockayne", which was a paradise of the improvident in which the one condition of prosperity was to take no thought. Brandt called his ship of "good fellows" the Ship of Cockayne. The "Ship of Cockayne" is thus the direct equivalent of the "Ships of Ruin" which preceded it, and Brandt in so far merely added one more to the medieval satires upon prodigal riot.<sup>43</sup> His plan was more comprehensive than this as prodigal riot was but one among the hundred and odd types of human infirmity, which he gathered under the head of Folly, and to which he extended in a strangely loose fashion the image of the Ship. It was to this, rather than to its confused and feebly executed imagery that the Ship of Fools owed its lasting influence, if not its immediate attraction in England, where it was destined to become one of the main starting points of modern satirical portraiture.

Herford's very thorough study of Brandt's plan simplifies the poem greatly. Six different notions are attached at various times to the cardinal term "Folly"; and under one or other all his Fools may be grouped.<sup>44</sup> Some have always been recognized as marks of Folly; others reflect the curious idiosyncrasy of Brandt's age. Under vicious or criminal offences, we have blasphemy, contempt for God, or for another life, oppression, forging, extortionate usury, hollow flattery, lust and adultery. All these are actions by which society suffers, while the offender may in a certain sense gain.

The second class of Fools are also unpleasant to their neighbors rather

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 333-338.

A satirical device of this kind evidently came of the same stock as the "Land of Cockayne", which was a paradise of the improvident in which the one condition of prosperity was to take no thought. Brandt called his ship of "good fellows" the Ship of Cockayne. The "Ship of Cockayne" is thus the direct equivalent of the "Ships of Ruin" which preceded it, and Brandt in so far merely added one more to the medieval satires upon prodigal riot.<sup>43</sup> His plan was more comprehensive than this as prodigal riot was but one among the hundred and odd types of human infirmity, which he gathered under the head of Folly, and to which he extended in a strangely loose fashion the image of the Ship. It was to this, rather than to its confused and feebly executed imagery that the Ship of Fools owed its lasting influence, if not its immediate attraction in England, where it was destined to become one of the main starting points of modern satirical portraiture.

Herford's very thorough study of Brandt's plan simplifies the poem greatly. Six different notions are attached at various times to the cardinal term "Folly"; and under one or other all his Fools may be grouped.<sup>44</sup> Some have always been recognized as marks of Folly; others reflect the curious idiosyncrasy of Brandt's age. Under vicious or criminal offences, we have blasphemy, contempt for God, or for another life, oppression, forging, extortionate usury, hollow flattery, lust and adultery. All these are actions by which society suffers, while the offender may in a certain sense gain.

The second class of Fools are also unpleasant to their neighbors rather

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 333-338.

than conspicuously or directly injurious to themselves; the insolent and quarrelsome people, who take offence at the slightest provocation, and carry every petty squabble into the law-courts; or wantonly injure and sneak away to avoid the consequences; petty tyrants like the civic officials, rough oppressors like the knights, insolent upstarts like the peasants.

The third class are also far from innocuous to society, but they do themselves still worse harm. Among the forms of "Riot" Brandt sternly condemned every kind of dissipation and the slightest breach of orderly social observance; dancing and gambling, heavy eating and drinking, disturbances and bad language in the streets, or in church, or at table, wantonness of idle students and workmen, butlers and cooks. And with these may be classed those who indulge in even innocent forms of the superfluity of wealth, of talk of books, of benefices, outlay of precious hours in the saddle, or with the gun.

The fourth class, like the third, is closely connected with the Folly of Cockayne; but their fault is one of neglect rather than of commission. People who neglect their children, or do not provide for old age, or for death, or for accidental mischances; or again, the merely lazy and indolent, the maid who slumbers at her wheel and the man who loiters at the mill. But neglect of duty was a relatively small offence, if it merely ended in inaction. It was at least consistent with being quiet and sober and thinking of oneself no higher than one ought to think, virtues on which Brandt is never weary of insisting. The Fools who incur his most persistent criticism, to whom he returns again and again, and who may be said to touch the very heart of his satire, are those who neglect their own duty to meddle with another's, the Fools of presumption.

He has nothing but scorn for this fifth type. The "unhappy Faun" who strove with Apollo, and was flayed for it, is his chosen type for those who attempt what is too hard for them. He was a firm believer<sup>in</sup>/the severe application of the practical maxim that, for society's sake, men must attend to themselves first. To ignore the mass of men is the beginning of wisdom. Another remarkable chapter is devoted to the fashionable Fools who travel and return no wiser than they went, and the students who throng the universities of Paris and Bologna, a cry heartily echoed through the whole sixteenth century by satirists everywhere, from Barclay to Greene and Nashe. Less amiable kinds of presumption are touched with hardly more severity, such as frivolous ambitions, worldly marriages, or meddlesome quarrel-making. These items are followed by a whole series of chapters devoted to assailing the common psychological ground of this class of Folly--idle confidence in one's own powers, or virtuousness, or good fortune, or in God's mercy, or in the speedy death of one's rich relatives.

Under Perversity, we have the last class, mere simpletons whose title to belong to the order of Fools has always been recognized: the people who "cut themselves with their own knife", who disobey their doctor, or make foolish exchanges, or who are fatuously credulous, or fatuously communicative, or generally weak and unstable in character, incapable of breaking a bad habit or keeping a good resolution.

Compared with other attempts of the same kind, Brandt's attempt, as we see, is extraordinarily comprehensive, and very German. It pictures the infirmities of German society in the year 1494, and is in perfect harmony with fifteenth century ethics and nomenclature. What Brandt originated was not the



ridicule of folly, for groups of fools as we have seen were satirized before, and even the ship idea was not unfamiliar to Brandt's readers; but to combine the two, to summon all the different kinds of fools, and to send them on a voyage in a huge ship, or in many ships, was new and proved a great success.<sup>45</sup> As the notion of folly was a very wide one, and comprised all sorts of personal and social vices and weaknesses, the book became an all-round satirical picture of the manners of the age. As regards the spirit of the whole, it must be sought above all in the moral purpose of the work.

The fundamental idea of the poem consists in the shipping off of several ship-loads of fools of all kinds for their native country, which, however, is visible at a distance only; and one would have expected the poet to have given poetical consistency to his work by fully carrying out the ideas of a ship's crew, and sailing to the "Land of Fools". It is at intervals only that Brandt reminds us of the allegory; the fools who are carefully divided into classes and introduced to us in succession, instead of being ridiculed or derided, are reproved in a liberal spirit with practical common sense.<sup>46</sup> The production is written in the dialect of Swabia, and consists of vigorous, resonant and rhyming quadrameters. The work is divided into one hundred thirteen sections, each of which, with the exception of a short introduction, and two concluding pieces, treats independently of a certain class of fools or vicious persons; and we are only occasionally reminded of the fundamental idea by an allusion to the ship.<sup>47</sup> No folly of the century was left un-

<sup>45</sup> Koelbing, Arthur, "Barclay and Skelton", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> Jamieson, Thomas Hill, op. cit., Intro., p. xv.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

censured; but Brandt not only blamed people but he wanted to induce them to mend their ways by demonstrating the absurdity or evil consequences of their follies. He thought mainly of his fellow-countrymen, but most of the follies and vices which he depicted and satirized were spread all over Europe, and the general feeling of discontent peculiar to that time of transition was extremely well expressed in the book.

The description of every folly is strengthened by the notice of its classical or biblical prototypes; of the Greek authors Plutarch only is used, and he evidently by means of a Latin translation. But from the Latin large draughts of inspiration are taken, direct from the fountain head,—Ovid, Juvenal, Persus, Catullus, and Seneca.<sup>48</sup> The Bible, of course, is a never failing source of illustration, and the Old Testament more frequently than the New, most use being made of the Proverbs of Solomon, while Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, and the Sapientia follow at no great distance.<sup>49</sup>

What was very important for the literary influence of Brandt was the profusion of concrete figures, types of classes, of professions, trades, spiritual and secular offices, with which he illustrated what no doubt was a classification by moral qualities. Professor Ward has expressed this view in a very full article on Barclay in the Dictionary of National Biography:

The English Ship of Fools exercised an important direct influence upon our literature, pre-eminently helping to bury medieval allegory in the grave which had long yawned before it, and to direct English authorship into the drama, essay and novel of character.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., Intro., pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xiii.

<sup>50</sup> "Alexander Barclay", Dictionary of National Biography.

Fifteen years elapsed from the appearance of the first German edition, before the English metrical version "translated out of Latin, French, and Doche—in the college of Saynt Mary Otery, by me, Alexander Barclay" was issued from the press of Pynson in 1509. A translation, however, it is not. Properly speaking it is an adaptation, an English ship formed and fashioned after the Ship of Fools of the World. According to the prologue, Barclay desired "to redress the errours and vyces of this our Royalme of Englande as the foresayde composers and translatours have done in theyr contrees". He continues, to tell us that he wished "to clense the vanyte and madness of folysshe people of whom over great nombre is in the Royalme of Englonde".

Therefore, Barclay follows his author "in sentence" rather than word, and it is very interesting to see how he added here and abridged there, to suit his English people and his personal taste. Whereas the learned Locher (who had translated it into Latin) had obliterated the popular spirit of Brandt's work, Barclay sought to intensify it by cutting out many classical references, exchanging unknown instances for such as were more familiar, introducing new comparisons and so on.<sup>51</sup> Barclay proceeded to transfer to an English ship the cargo of common types of fools assembled by Brandt. To replace the particular German eccentricities described by Brandt, Barclay supplied vignettes of his own, drawn from English life as he knew it; but the main burden of the vessel, the great common family of fools, was the same in German and English.<sup>52</sup> Barclay followed through in the didactic manner; his

---

<sup>51</sup>Koelbing, Arthur, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>52</sup>Swain, Barbara, op. cit., p. 123.

version of Locher's prologue shows how soberly he accepted the work of reform and instruction.<sup>53</sup>

For in lyke wise as olde poetes Satyriens in dyvers Poesyes conjoynd reprieved the synnes of ylnes of the people at that tyme lyvyng; so and in lyke wise this our Boke representeth unto the eyen of the redars the states and condicions of men; so that every man may behold within the same the cours of his lyfe and his mysgoverned manners, as he should behold the shadowe of the figure of his visage within a bright mirrour.

Then Barclay tells us that he rules as chief master and captain. He mentions that in ancient Roman days, and the days of Greece, vices were rebuked by philosophers and great poets, Plato, Socrates, Aristophanes, Horace, and others. Dr. Brandt has done this for Barclay's day, and Barclay has translated his work out of "Latin, French and Doche into Englishe". He has not translated word by word—"some tyme addynge, some tyme detractinge, and takinge away such things as semeth me necessary and superflue".<sup>54</sup> He called it Ship of foles of worlde, "for the world is a tempestuous se where we daily wander and cast in tribulation". In form Barclay's work uses the Rime Royal type of stanza, and each section or story in verse is preceded by a wood cut, denoting and describing some particular type of vanity, caricaturing the fools who involve themselves there. Practically every section is completed by the Envoi to the reader, wherein the "fools" are exhorted to do better, since salvation and heaven ultimately can be their reward.

<sup>53</sup> Jamieson, Thomas Hill, (Editor), Barclay's translation of The Ship of Fools by Sebastian Brandt, Vol. I, p. 17.

(Hereafter all references to this work will be made to the Jamieson edition.)

<sup>54</sup> The Ship of Fools, Vol. I, p. 17.

We note, first of all, that Barclay, particularly inveighs against the greatest fools of all, those who do not keep salvation in mind. He particularly criticizes those who give bad example,<sup>55</sup> evil counsellors,<sup>56</sup> despisers of Holy Scripture,<sup>57</sup> blasphemers,<sup>58</sup> disordered lovers,<sup>59</sup> false accusers,<sup>60</sup> and those who do not keep the holy days.<sup>61</sup>

In the next class of fools, we note the insolent and quarrelsome, tale berers,<sup>62</sup> destroyers of friendship,<sup>63</sup> fools that go to law for nought,<sup>64</sup> and oppressors of the poor.<sup>65</sup> These fools are marked by their disrespect for their neighbors, rather than by their injuries to themselves.

---

<sup>55</sup>The Ship of Fools, I, p. 234.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., I, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., I, p. 71.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., II, p. 128.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., I, p. 79.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., I, p. 210

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., II, p. 174.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., I, p. 53.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., I, p. 66.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., II, p. 48

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., II, p. 80.

Barclay has nothing but condemnation for the next group, who do themselves harm by their modes of living. Those given to superfluity of curiosity,<sup>66</sup> of benefices,<sup>67</sup> of unprofitable books;<sup>68</sup> the nyght watchers,<sup>69</sup> the covetous and prodigal,<sup>70</sup> the wearers of indecent clothes,<sup>71</sup> card-players,<sup>72</sup> dancers,<sup>73</sup> idle students, and travellers,<sup>74</sup> and those that exhibit bad manners<sup>75</sup> are called dissipaters by him.

Those that are given to sloth,<sup>76</sup> the improvident,<sup>77</sup> the neglecters of children,<sup>78</sup> the ones that don't provide for old age,<sup>79</sup> and lazy beggars who use false bones as relics and plasters to pretend injuries,<sup>80</sup> all receive the venom of Barclay's pen.

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., I, p. 129.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., I, p. 156.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., I, p. 19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., I, p. 296.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., I, p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., I, p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., II, p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., I, p. 291.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., I, p. 142

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., I, p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., II, p. 184.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., I, p. 75.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., I, p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., I, p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., I, p. 301.

In inveighing against the next group, we must constantly keep in mind the maxim that a wise man knows his own business and no one else's. We are told that "charity begins at home";<sup>81</sup> not to presume on God's mercy;<sup>82</sup> not to build without provision;<sup>83</sup> not to think of happiness through worldly marriages;<sup>84</sup> not to ill judge others while we are more in sin, than they,<sup>85</sup> and not to continue in folly when we have been given wholesome example.<sup>86</sup> These offenders are all members of the "Ship" since they have idle confidence in themselves, or are too presumptuous on God's mercy.

In the last group we find the fools who disobey their doctor,<sup>87</sup> who can't keep their own counsel,<sup>88</sup> who refuse to follow good advice,<sup>89</sup> and, finally, those who make foolish exchanges.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., I, p. 277.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., I, p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., I, p. 88.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., I, p. 247.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., I, p. 152.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., I, p. 175.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., I, p. 192.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 197, 243.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., I, p. 57.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., II, p. 141.

All of Barclay's fools are shown the error of their ways while there is yet time to amend, and he leaves them with the final admonition to serve their God first, and then their king, being meanwhile to "their neighbors just and kind".<sup>91</sup>

As Brandt's book is the precursor of a whole body of European satirical literature, aiming at mending the ways of the world, so is Barclay's, in England, at the beginning years of the sixteenth century, the starting point and main source for the specialized types of satire which are to follow, all aiming at a correction of abuses due to social conditions. The texture of the Ship of Fools consists of the commonest language of the day, and in it are interwoven many of the current popular proverbs and expressions. Barclay's writings introduced many of our common sayings for the first time to English literature, no writer prior to Barclay having thought it dignified or worthwhile to profit by the popular wisdom to any perceptible extent.<sup>92</sup> The first collection of proverbs did not appear until 1546, from the pen of Heywood, so that in Barclay we possess the earliest known English form of such proverbs as he introduces. Thus in the Ship of Fools we see an initiation of a new kind of literature, that written for the people, using their language and witticisms as a means of conveying the story and moral.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., II, p. 321.

<sup>92</sup> Jamieson, Thomas Hill, (editor), op. cit., Intro., P. 1.



## CHAPTER II

### THE POPULAR SATIRES: THE FOOL LITERATURE; BEGGAR-MATERIALS; TESTAMENTS; SATIRES-ON-WOMEN

The concrete and individual pictures of society, set forth by the Ship of Fools were in Germany hardly so much relished as the fantastic and humorous imagery of the Fool, in which they were disguised, but the wild humor was, however, not wholly congenial to the somewhat realistic genius of English satire; and the Fool in Brandt's sense remained locked up in the pages of his translator.<sup>1</sup> No other universal satirist formed himself upon this model; and the crew of Fools begot for the most part only crews of knaves, beggars, courtiers, and court-jesters—separate detachments which the private experience of each writer, rather than his moral judgment, led him to single out for special chastisement. But what they lost in breadth, Brandt's English successors gained in distinctness, in vigorous and vivid realism, in fulness of detail. This device of compiling lists of offenders against society survived for a long time, and many of the types described in later lists are those which appeared in the lists of fools. The direct literary influence of Brandt is first noticeable in Cock Lorell's Bote (c. 1510) with her crew of London Craftsmen, illustrated by woodcuts from the Ship of Fools, representing a ship-full of rascals.

---

<sup>1</sup>Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 341.

Cocke Lorell's Bote exists only as a remarkable fragment. Whoever the author, he gave us not merely a piece of writing of high antiquarian and philological interest, but one of the most vivid pictures we possess of vagrant life, comparable with "Robin Hood", and in contemporary literature paralleled only by a poem which it doubtless contributed to produce, the Hye Way to the Spittel Hous.<sup>2</sup> It is not without many marks of a seriousness as genuine as Brandt's, though less bitter, but this is broken by flashes of half suppressed sympathy with the wild outlaw life. Something of the atmosphere of the greenwood is transferred to the scenery through which the "Bote" makes its endless voyage; and Cocke Lorell is hardly more the chief of a Ship of Fools than a naval Robin Hood among his merry men.<sup>3</sup>

The fragment opens with a description of the crew. Knavish tradesmen of every craft are crowding to the "Bote" at the summons of Cocke Lorell. Then appears, with an abruptness which the lost opening pages would probably have explained, a pardoner, bringing the roll of what is now seen to be a "religious fraternity" of knaves, and a list of the privileges which the pope is pleased to grant them, both of which he reads:<sup>4</sup>

The pope Darlaye hath graunted in his byll  
That every brother may do what he wyll—  
Also Pope Nycoll graunteth you all in this texte  
The coughe and the colicke the goute and the flyxe,  
With a holsome tooth-ache.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>4</sup>Rimbault, E. F., (editor), "Cock Lorell's Bote" in Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages, (Percy Society), p. 4.

This is followed by a long enumeration of the names of the crafts represented—a store-house of the trade nomenclature of the early sixteenth century; in all, members of two hundred seventy-one crafts are called. Then we have the spirited account of the voyage. Cocke Lorell starts by blowing his whistle, the crew set up the rowers' cry and smartly ~~strike~~ the water; "there was none that there was, but he had an office more or lasse", for in "Cockes bote eche man had an ore". It was a jolly company as the poet tells us:<sup>5</sup>

For all reskyllers from them they dyde trye  
 They banysshed prayer, peas, and sadnes;  
 And toke with them myrthe, sporte, and gladnes;  
 They wolde not have vertu ne yet devocyon;  
 But ryotte, and revell, with ioly rebellyon.

We see them leave, singing merry ballads; but occasionally they pull to shore to dance. But off they are soon again, and once more we hear the poet's voice:<sup>6</sup>

They sayled England thorowe and thorowe,  
 Vyllage, towne, cyte, and barowe;  
 They blessed theyr shyppe whan they had done,  
 And dranke about Saynt Julyans torne  
 Than every man pulled at his ore,

and, with that, the poet "coulde se them no more". But so popular was Cocke that others, "ermytes, monkes, and nonnes", desiring room on his craft left sad but determined "to mete with Cocke another yere".

Thus the poem appears as an attempt to fuse two conflicting though kindred motives; the travesty of a religious order and the Ship of Fools.<sup>7</sup> Most of the first part is only a new variety of the Order of Knaves. For a century

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 345.

afterwards Cocke was, if not "the founder", the "confirmer" of the "Twenty-five Orders" of knaves. But the constitution of the crew, their offices, and above all the voyage are obviously drawn from the Ship of Fools and from Barclay's version of it. The members of the "fraternity" are what Brandt called "Craftsmen-fools"; they are the rogues of the whole commercial and artisan world, gathered out of every craft and calling. The spirited account of the Fools rushing in from all sides to get a place in the ship, taken immediately from Barclay, has served as a framework for the first part of Cocke Lorell, where Cocke receives the applicants for admission as they successively appear, and especially the vivid picture which follows:<sup>8</sup>

Than Cocke cast a syde his hede,  
And sawe the stretes all over sprede  
That to his bote wolde come.

In Barclay, the Ship of improvident "good fellows", destined to be borne through continual misfortunes to final ruin, performs the less tragic role of a grand tour through the world, to pick up the Fools who are everywhere eagerly awaiting it, and no where more than in the harbors and cities of England. But in Cocke Lorell's Bote, the Voyage is, on the one hand, without misfortune, and on the other, entirely English—a genuine English ship and a genuinely English voyage, a crew of Londoners, painted with a variety and humor which sufficiently contrasts them with the monstrous features of Brandt's Fools, commanded by a noted English rogue. The voyage appears to have no destination, and there are no unfortunate consequences.

---

<sup>8</sup> Cocke Lorell's Bote, p. 8.

The tract is a burlesque rhapsody on the lower-middle classes. The reason for its being seems to center about the growth of city life, and with it the consequent curiosity in the eccentricities of common place character, which leads men to take an increasing interest in their neighbors' lives. The fragment was printed by Wynkyn de Worde without date, but it was known soon after the accession of Henry VIII, and it does give us a graphic picture of the habits and morals of the lower classes of society in the latter part of the reign of the preceding monarch.<sup>9</sup> The hero was a well known character of the time, a notorious vagabond, head of a gang of thieves which infested London and its vicinity during that period.

In Samuel Rowland's Martin Markall, Beadle of Bridewell, his Defence and Answers to the Belman of London, 1610, he is enumerated second in a list of rogues by profession and is thus described:<sup>10</sup>

After him succeeded by general councell, one Cocke Lorell, the most notorious knave that ever lived; by trade he was a tinker, often carrying a panne and a hammer for show; but when he came to a good booty he would cast his profession in a ditch, and play the padder, and then would alway, and and as he past through town crie "Ha you any worke for a tinker?" To write of his knaveries it would aske a long time. I refer you to the old Ms. remaining on record in Maunder's Hall. This was he that reduced and brought in forme the Catalogue of Vagabonds, or Quarterne of Knaves; but because it is extant, and in every mans shop, I passe them over\*\*\*\*\*This Cocke Lorell continued among them longer than any of his predecessors before him, or after him, for he ruled almost two and twentie yeares, until the yeare An. Dom. 1533, and about the five and twenty yeare of King Henry the Eight.

<sup>9</sup> Rimbault, Edward F., (editor), op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., (quoted), Intro., p. vi.

Thus we place our captain as a living character and this fact in itself initiates something rather original in English poetry. Since the time of Chaucer and Langland, serious verse had been practically confined to the regions of classical or sacred story and moral allegory.<sup>11</sup> Our author's portraits of knaves are not at all comparable in literary refinement with those of Chaucer's pilgrims, but they are equally an attempt to find the material for literature in close observation of real life instead of in allegorical subtleties.<sup>12</sup> The abstraction was a familiar feature of medieval literature, but Brandt and Barclay substituted the type for it; whereas it remained to the author of Cocke Lorell's Bote to inaugurate a further advance; his crew of knaves are no longer types; they are almost individuals, and their captain was one of the leading rascals in the events of his day.

But, what was to be the fate of the Ship? This was a topic only lightly touched by the author of Cocke Lorell; and Brandt and Barclay had left the answer to be inferred from the general nature and bias of their satire. Copland's Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous, published after 1531, was suggested, certainly, by Barclay's chapter on beggars and vagabonds. But until this time the prospective ruin of the race of Fools, Knaves, and Courtiers remains at the most a looming catastrophe in the dim and distant future. Then Copland inverts this course, by bringing what may be called the economic aspect of Folly into the immediate foreground, and introducing an analysis of the forms of worldly foolishness by a vivid picture of the ruin and beggary to which they lead.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 350.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

Copland's Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous represents an interview between the author and the porter of an almshouse. It takes the form of the familiar medieval dialogue, and it uses the Rime Royal stanza. The value of the poem lies in the information furnished as to the state of the lower classes of society in the early part of the sixteenth century. Copland intended to "write misery of such as live in nede, and all their life in idleness lede".<sup>14</sup> The poem contains interesting bits of description of contemporary life and some rogue tricks and beggars' cant. Mainly, however, it presents a warning against various kinds of foolishness which will lead one to beggary; it is evidently, as we have said, based on the Ship of Follys and does not aim primarily at exposing rogue life.

The story opens by Copland's taking refuge from a passing shower in the porch of the Spyttel-house, where he falls into a conversation with the porter. Meanwhile gathered at the gate "people of every poor estate"; we see the "crooked, lame, scalde, scurvy, and lowsy"; all of whom are evidently welcome to enter the Spyttel-hous. The conversation between the porter and the author leads to a number of very graphic sketches of vagrant life; the beggars near Saynt Paule's beg for money which they spend for dining. The porter tells us:<sup>15</sup>

They walke to eche market, and fayre,  
And to all places where folke do repayre,  
By day on styltes, or stoupyng on crowches,  
And so dyssymule as fals lewtryng flowches,  
With bloody clowtes all about theyr legges,  
And playsters on theyr skyn whan they go beg;

<sup>14</sup> Copland, Robert "The Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous", Select Pieces of Early Popular Poetry, II, p. 5.

(All future references to the "Hye Way" will be to this edition.)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

Some countrefayt lepry, and other some  
 Put sope in theyr mouth to make it scome,  
 And fall downe as Saynt Carnelys evyll,  
 These dysceyts they use worse than any devyll;  
 And whan they be in theyr owne company,  
 They be as hole as eyther you or I.

Then the conversation continues, describing a few of the types that come.

Copland's request that he be told of the "folke in generall that come the hye way to the hospyttal" launches the porter out into a detailed description of the classes that are "on the road to ruin", which occupies practically the latter half of the poem.

We are especially concerned with this section. The first part seems to have no deliberate invention. But with the second part the motive changes. The talk is now for the most part such as any close observer of the world might arrive at for himself.

The opening verses strike the note of this changed manner at once; for they are almost identical with the opening stanza of Lydgate's enumeration of Fools in his Order of Fools (verses 9-16):<sup>16</sup>

The chief of foolis, as men in bokis redethe,  
 And able in his foly to hold residence  
 Is he that nowther lovithe God ne dredithe  
 Nor to his chirche hath none advertence,  
 Ne to his seyntes dothe no reverence,  
 To fader and moder dothe no benevolence,  
 And also hath disdayn to folke in poverte,  
 Enrolle up his patent, for he shall never the.

This is Copland's version:<sup>17</sup>

There cometh in this vyage  
 They that toward God have no courage,  
 And to his worde gyve none advertence;  
 Eke to father and mother do not reverence;  
 They that despyse folk in adversyte.

<sup>16</sup> Herford, Charles H., (quoted), op. cit., p. 359.

<sup>17</sup> The Hye Way to the Spyttel-Hous (verses 573-577), p. 29.



The "Hye Way" is thus tacitly connected at the outset with the traditional lists of Fools. It becomes obvious as we proceed that it is not, as it professes, a catalogue of prospective paupers at all, but of those only whom their own vice leads to pauperism. At the same time it is clear that the scope of Copland's satire is narrower than Brandt's. His subject is beggary, and he keeps within the limits of the forms of Folly which issue in it. Copland has, like the author of Cocke Lorell, applied the idea of a series of fools to a particular class. His are the fools who come to beggary, as the fools in Cocke Lorell are the dregs of commerce.

Over forty types of beggar fools are listed; prominent among them we find those who live in too much luxury,<sup>18</sup> those that are lazy and wasteful,<sup>19</sup> those that become a prey to usurers,<sup>20</sup> the gamblers,<sup>21</sup> the fools who live in hopes of receiving fortunes,<sup>22</sup> and those, particularly decried by Brandt as well, that help others, themselves being more needy.<sup>23</sup> Copland has no patience with the husband who gives all the "soveraynte" to the wife, allowing her to attend "feestes", "daunces, and plays."<sup>24</sup> He will surely come the "Hye Way"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 29, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 31

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 35, 47.

soon, with the other fools who care not to save for mischance. All of these receive scorn from the porter as Copland interrupts inquiring about "maryners hyther of Cok Lorels bote".

Yes, we are told:<sup>25</sup>

Every day they be alway a flote;    + +  
 We must them receyve, and gyve them costes fre,  
 And also with them the fraternyte  
 Of unthryftes, which do our house endewe,  
 And never fayle with brethren alway newe.  
 Also here is kept, and holden in degre,  
 Within our hous the ordres VIII tyme thre  
 Of knaves only;—  
 And chyef of all that dooth us encombre  
 The ordre of fooles, that be without nombre.

This very last speech of the porter shows the influence of Cock Lorell and the Ship both upon the literature of common life and upon the people themselves. Since now the author has fulfilled his aim "to eschue vyce", we find the shower is over, and Copland is free to depart from the Spyttel-hous porch.

It appears that about the time when Copland was thus attempting to classify the world of beggars, the beggars were developing an actual classification of their own, the full disclosures of which, a quarter of a century later, took respectable England by surprise and contributed a quite novel element to the methods, as well as to the materials of social satire.<sup>26</sup> These vegrants and outcasts, the debris of organized society had organized themselves. They had official chiefs and various grades of subordinate rank, each with nicely defined powers and privileges, and bearing titles which enhanced the vague prestige which they inspired in the uninitiated public.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>26</sup>Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 362.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 362.

To the printer Awdeley, who first gave a detailed account of the system, it at once recalled the most celebrated English tradition of its kind, the "Order of Knaves" founded by Cocke Lorell.

Again we see the power of literary tradition. Awdeley evidently found no more appropriate title than one as old as Wineker; under an old name, he followed up the idea of the German Liber Vagatorum, and produced an anatomy of vagabond life and vagrancy.<sup>28</sup> Liber Vagatorum composed in Germany, 1510, versified in 1517, and reedited in prose by Martin Luther in 1528 was the earliest volume of the kind. The English, through Awdeley, followed with the Fraternitye of Vacabonds. This was licensed in 1560-61; but by 1575 the original work was supplemented; and in that edition we have for the first time a very full title: The Fraternitye of Vacabondes; As wel of rufling Vacabondes, as of beggerly, of women as of men, of Gyrles as of Boyes, with their proper names and qualities. With a description of the crafty company of Cousoners and Shifters. This is a description of real vagabonds and conny catchers, drawn apparently from life. The second part is "literary" rogue satire, drawn not from life but from Barclay's Ship of Fools via Cocke Lorelles Bote. The rest of the title page reads: Whereunto also is adjoynd the XXV orders of Knaves otherwyse called a Quartern of Knaves. Confirmed forever by Cocke Lorell.

The connection between the two Awdeley attempts to establish in poetical fashion by the following stanzas underneath the title:<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>29</sup>Viles, Edward and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), The Fraternitye of Vacabondes, by John Awdeley, p. 1.

(All future references will be made to this edition.)

The Uprightman speaketh  
 Our Brotherhood of Vacabondes,  
 If you would know where dwell?  
 In graves end Barge which syldome standes,  
 The talke wyll shew ryght well.

Cocke Lorell aunswereth.  
 Some orders of my knaves also  
 In that Barge shall ye fynde:  
 For no where shall ye walke I trow  
 But ye shall see their kynde.

We see thus that the Fraternitye of Vacabondes is a compound of this foreign satire of the type inspired by the Shyp of Folys; with native English vagabond lore, the result of observation of contemporary manners and customs; and the difference between the two is strikingly illustrated.<sup>30</sup>

Now, the whole work may be conveniently divided into three parts. The first part of the Fraternitye is of value as reflecting actual low-life. It employs the cant and sets forth the hierarchy of vagabonds, as it reappears through the anatomies, fiction, and the drama. It really amounts to a descriptive catalogue of the different kinds and grades in the fraternity, an exposition of the nineteen varieties of rogues from the Abraham man to the Patriarke Co. In Awdley's preface to the reader, he really tries to give us the proof for his descriptions by reporting that a rogue present at a "Sessions where Justices sat" promised if he were spared and if his name were not disclosed that "he would declare both names and states of most and least, of this their Vacabondes brotherhood".<sup>31</sup>

The Abraham Man walks bare armed and bare legged, and "fayneth himselfe mad" and calls himself poore Tom.<sup>32</sup> The Ruffeler pretends to be a Servitor

<sup>30</sup> Aydelotte, Frank, "Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds" in Oxford Historical and Literary Studies, 3 vols., Vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> The Fraternitye of Vacabondes, Pref., p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

in the wars, and begs for relief; but his chief trade is to rob poor men and women.<sup>33</sup> The Prygmen steal clothes from the hedges, poultry from the yard, carrying them to the Alehouse, which they call the Bowsyng In, and "ther syt playing at cardes and dice, tyl that is spent which they have so fylched."<sup>34</sup> The Whipjacke begs as a ship-wrecked Maryner, but his chief trade is to "rob Bowthes in a Faire, or to pilfer ware from staules, which they call heaving of the Bowth".<sup>35</sup> The Frater begs for Hospitals;<sup>36</sup> the Quire Bird rejoices in release from jail;<sup>37</sup> and the Upright Man rules the crew.<sup>38</sup> The latter is of so much authority, that meeting with any of his profession, he may call them to account and command a share of all that they have gained by their trade in one month. If he do wrong they have no remedy against him, even though "he beate them, as he useth commonly to do." He may also command many of their women, which they call Doxies.

Now, the Curtall is similar to the Upright Man, but "hys authority is not fully so great".<sup>39</sup> Palliard goes about in a patched cloake;<sup>40</sup> while an Irish Toyle carries laces and pins to peddle while stealing.<sup>41</sup> The Jarkeman forges

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

seals;<sup>42</sup> Swygmén bear packs on their backs;<sup>43</sup> Washmen lie in the hye way with lame or sore legs, bitten with spickwarts and ratsbane;<sup>44</sup> and Tinkards feign tinkering to steal.<sup>45</sup> Wilde Roges are those born to roguery;<sup>46</sup> Kitchin Coes are idle runagate Boys;<sup>47</sup> Kitchin Mortes are girls given to a wild life,<sup>48</sup> whereas Doxies are older girls who consort with any of the rabble;<sup>49</sup> and the Patriarke Co is hedge priest of the association, making marriages over dead horses or cattle by having the partners to the agreement shaking hands.<sup>50</sup>

The second division transcends in interest this mere catalogue of the first section, for here three cheats are described in detail; the first that of the Curtesy Man, a genteel beggar who threatens and then robs if refused.<sup>51</sup> He introduces himself by making a low curtesy, saying that he has come lately from the wars and is without work and money, although he had been wealthily brought up. Finally he asks for money, and forces the issue if refused. The Fingerer posing as a rustic loses at cards to associates, but suddenly changes

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

his game in order to fleece the young gallant persuaded to play. All at the breakfast table are of one group and after the play is over, the profits are divided equally.<sup>52</sup> The last story in the second division concerns the Ring-faller who, dropping a gilded copper ring before a country rustic, pretends to spy it at the same moment as his victim, but consents to sell his "half-part" or to gamble for the counterfeit jewel.<sup>53</sup> Sometimes these rings are given in pawn for wares, and sometimes by a sleight-of-hand trick a copper token is exchanged for gold, even after the goldsmith has certified to the quality of the article. All these descriptions comprise the last section of the Fraternitye proper; but in the fuller work which we are treating we find a third classification.

This third and last section is more especially suggested by the fool-satires and Cocke Lorelles Bote; it names twenty-five orders of knaves, giving their descriptions as well as exposing their craft. The XXV Orders of Knaves are so many different kinds of unruly, idle, serving men—knaves but not necessarily vagabonds. The artificial satire, the vagueness of the statements, the straining for a moral, all contrast sharply with the plain realistic tone of Awdeley's description of the Fraternitye of Vacabondes.<sup>54</sup> The one is distinctly a result of the Germanic influence; the other, the initiation of a typically English genre. The Fraternitye is a matter-of-fact account of a real society, an abstract of titles and offices, whereas the Quartern of Knaves appended to it is a satirical classification of social types.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>54</sup>Aydelotte, Frank, op. cit., p. 118.

The Vagabonds' titles are of their own coinage, invented by rogues for rogues, with an eye either to disguise or euphemism. Those of the "knaves" on the contrary, are in the main the objurgatory epithets of their masters, brief and sarcastic catchwords out of the immemorial bill of charges against those that serve. Therefore, we have, instead of mere descriptive sketches of the Fraternitye, a series of satirical characters:

Unthrif, for example, "that will not put his wearing clothes to washing, nor black his own shoes";<sup>55</sup>

Ungracious, he "that by his own will will bear no manner of service without he be compelled thereunto by his rulers";<sup>56</sup>

Rynce Pytcher, he that will take his master's drink;<sup>57</sup>

Commitour of Tidinges, a tale bearer;<sup>58</sup>

Proctour, he that tarries long when sent on errands;<sup>59</sup>

Obloquium, he that will take a tale out of his master's mouth and tell it himself;<sup>60</sup>

Simon Soone Agon, he that hides himself when needed;<sup>61</sup>

Mounch Present, he that always samples presents of food, when sent as a messenger by his master;<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>The Fraternitye of Vacabondes, p. 15.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 13

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 14

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 13

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



Esen Droppers, they that stand under men's walls or windows to hear the secrets of the house;<sup>63</sup>

Nunquam, he that wilfully delays when sent on errands.<sup>64</sup>

Twenty-five orders of serving-men are thus described but the above names represent the most descriptive titles. This Quartern of Knaves, although being connected with the Ship of Follys through the link of Cocke Lorelles Bote, approximated more nearly than either of these, to the social satire of the next century, as neither of them dwelt very largely in pure analysis of character.<sup>65</sup> In the Bote, it is sacrificed to description; in the Ship, to morals and parallels. Audeley's efforts in this kind were quite clear and decided in method. They were a step, distinct, however minute, in the long and slow advance of literary realism, in the better sense, upon the territory of medieval allegory. This advance was stimulated by every influence which led to the study of society at first hand; and we owe a great deal to the maligned vagabonds whose eccentric life drew them into literature.

Audeley's beggar-book suggested to Thomas Harman the plan of his more elaborate A Caveat or Warening For Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones (1567). It is a collection of anecdotes based upon hearsay or experience and clustered about a list of twenty-three criminal orders. These repeat most of Audeley's and add several others. Thomas Harman was a gentleman of moderate fortune who lived at Crayford, for twenty years keeping a

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 364.

house "where unto poverty dayely hath, and doth rapyre". The depredations and immorality of the rabblement drove him at last to make a thorough inquiry into their practices, and expose them to the authorities and the public.<sup>66</sup>

He gives a full account of each type of rogue, with information about the localities they chiefly haunt, and anecdotes of their doings, for most of which he can avouch his own experience. In twenty-four chapters, varying in length, important data has been accumulated out of which the character of the sixteenth century thief may be constructed; the different departments of a highly specialized profession are explained.

In agreement with the spirit of the day, Harman prefaces his work with statements threatening not only the counterfeit beggars but also owners of houses where thieves are kept, and to which they bring their ill-gotten goods in hopes of receiving a pittance, while the buyers have the greatest gains. He particularly addresses his epistle to the Countess of Shrewsbury who takes care of her poor neighbors and all who approach her gates. If the counterfeits are exposed, the justices may punish them, and since these rascals will no longer range about the country, greater relief will be given to the deserving poor.<sup>67</sup>

The criminal orders practically correspond to Awdeley's account, but in the Caveat we have a few additions as well as a compilation of thirteen tales picturing very graphically the deeds of various members of the brotherhood.

<sup>66</sup> Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 131.

<sup>67</sup> Viles, Edward, and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), A Caveat or Warening For Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones, by Thomas Harman, pp. 19-25.

One story in connection with the Walking Mort illustrates well Harman's plan.<sup>68</sup> This story was related to the author by the women involved. It centers about a farmer who had decided to be unfaithful to his wife, but since the wife was a good woman, the Mort reported that the husband had appointed a place of meeting with her. Finally, the wife advises the Mort to keep the appointment; the husband unsuspecting receives a trouncing from the wife's gossips; and all ends well. The unfaithful man bemoaning his wounds resolves never to do such a deed again, and we are told that his life became so exemplary that he was pointed out and admired by all. Harman takes particular pains to stress the moral of all his anecdotes.

Appended to his tales and orders, are the names of Upright Men, Roges, and Pallyards—"living nowe at this present".<sup>69</sup> In alphabetical order, the names of one hundred forty Upright Men, forty-four Roges, and thirty-one Pallyards are given. Then follow their "pelting speeche", called "Peddelars Frenche",<sup>70</sup> and a dialogue in cant between an Upright Man and a Roge, which is translated into English for the reader.<sup>71</sup> To further the moral purpose of the book several pages are illustrated with fetters, shackles, and whips in order to inject fear into these hypocritical vagabonds. Finally, the gallows is sketched, and in doggerel stanzas below we are told of one who did not mend his ways, and now requests our prayers.<sup>72</sup> Once more, on the concluding page, Harman proclaims that his book is a mirror where offenders may see "their

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-73.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-82.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-84.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-87.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

double demeaner, their lives, language and names that they will amend their misdeeds and so live unharmed".<sup>73</sup>

We are interested in the work because of the realistic stories, purporting to have come from actual experience with thieves and beggars. Harman aims to proclaim his moral purpose in his work, but many of the tales are filled with a humor of a very brutal, elementary kind, that consists in laughing at the misfortunes of people who have been duped by members of the vagabond tribe. The question arises: Did Harman really aim at improving conditions, or, in order to satisfy the curiosity of his public, and to provide a reason for his interesting anecdotes, did he place them against a background of vagabondage and thievery?

Harman's work furnished an account of the rogue hierarchy to the Reverend William Harrison, whose contribution to Holinshed's Chronicles, entitled a "Description of England", suggests measures of social reform; and his experiments in the canting speech inspired many imitators.<sup>74</sup> One of the important pieces of writing at this period has the opposite aim. Parson Haben's A Sermon in Praise of Thieves and Thievery, made at the command of seven thieves who had robbed him, really amounts to a condoning of the actions of thieves.

In his talk to the thieves, Haben stresses the fact that there are many admirable qualities in their lives, such as fortitude, courage and "boldnes of stomacke".<sup>75</sup> From the Old Testament examples are given to prove that

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>74</sup>Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, The Literature of Roguery, 2 volumes, Vol. I, p. 92.

<sup>75</sup>Viles, Edward, and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), A Sermon in Praise of Thieves and Thievery by Parson Haben, p. 92.

Christ has befriended thieves, namely Jacob and the people of Israel.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, a parallel is drawn between Christ's life and the life of thieves; in one point only are they dissimilar: Christ ascended into heaven, which the thief cannot do without God's mercy.<sup>77</sup> To further accentuate the virtues of these rogues, Haben tells us that they returned his money and also presented him with a gift for his sermon.<sup>78</sup>

Although this work comes down to us without date, it has been placed in Elizabeth's reign, and its value lies in the fact that it illustrates that literature about thieves seemed to have reached a high level for popularity among all types of people. Most of the authors of this genus, however, pretended to study rogue life and behavior, but these pamphleteers broke several of the rules which ought to govern scientific observation. But the literary success of their achievement has far outweighed their lack of close insight into the problem, for they have given us instead of reforming tracts some delightful stories, where the author so far forgets himself as to exalt the character of the intended villain.

This spirit of character study found expression through another inherited literary form. The fifteenth century had produced devotional and sentimental documents in the form of a will or testament, and these were borrowed from by ribald humorists who grouped the objects of their satire under the heading of a legacy, instead of the popular ship or fraternity.<sup>79</sup> The idea originated

---

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>79</sup>Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 95.

among the Romans of the decadence and was developed by French writers of the fifteenth century, especially by Villon, in his half serious, half ribald will, Le Grant et le petit Testament (two separate poems), 1489.<sup>80</sup> But one of the first essays in this type of literature, which emanated from the genuine emotions of the mind was made by a man of noble birth, Jean Regnier, who, notwithstanding his birth and his fortune, did not think it beneath him to declare his sentiments with pathetic sincerity.<sup>81</sup> He was at the time in prison at Beauvais, about to be tried for high treason. He drew up a will in rhyme, half earnest, half jocular, which was doubtless used by Villon for his two "Testaments".

Villon's Grand Testament is a singular compound of wild gaiety, of keen satire, of profound sensibility and of calm judgment.<sup>82</sup> His example led to the publication of a host of other satiric poems, mostly by anonymous authors, which were propagated among the middle and lower classes by the newly discovered printing press.

The first English imitation is Jyl of Breyntford's Testament by Robert Copland, in which Jyl bequeaths an unsavory legacy to certain typical fools, being especially careful to bring the number of her legatees up to a quartern. Those for whom she expresses her contempt are either the people who cannot take their places in life, who quarrel without cause, who borrow without paying back, who trample needlessly on their fellows in advancing their own interests, or those who neglect their own interests to serve others. Although

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>81</sup>LaCroix, Paul, op. cit., p. 440.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

she does not refer to them as fools, or specifically organize them into an order, we see evidences of both of these devices, since individuals who receive her contempt are members of an exact "quarterne" and their descriptions parallel characters from the Ship.

The most important production of this class is Colin Blawbol's Testament, written about the year 1508. Colin, just recovering from an appalling surfeit of liquor espies an equivocal confessor, Sir John Doclaw, through whose agency a will is finally composed, in which the drunkard bequeaths his soul to Diana, as goddess of the salt seas, in which he expects to do penance for his unflagging indulgence in sweet wine; his lands to the notorious district of "Southwerke"; six marks of spruce to his secretary, "registered a brother in the order of folly"; and a sum of one hundred marks to defray the cost of his funeral for "bred and wyne". He requests that all the "good drinkers" be there and that they satisfy their desires.

Then, just as Cocke Lorell contains a list of sixteenth century trades, so this tract enumerates thirty-two kinds of wine then in vogue. The pamphlet then concludes with the naming of the executor, Allyn Maltson, and the supervisor, Sybour Grouted. This production is worth notice because of the unmistakable evidence it bears to the growing interest in character and in discrimination of types.<sup>83</sup>

This fashion of writing mock testaments appears to have become popular. But the most interesting of later testaments is The Wyll of the Devyll, printed and composed about 1550 by Humphrey Powell. The greater part is taken up with savage invective against the Roman Catholic Church, the devil, on his

<sup>83</sup> Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 97.

deathbed, bequeathing his vices and superstitions to papists and priests. The book is most significant. Its range covers the great religious controversy of the century and penetrates into the minor abuses of society. Yet, it appears in an essentially popular literary form, and shows how considerable a part of the reading public was found among the common people.

Powell's invective is hurled against two main enemies, the Roman Catholic Church and the cheaters of society. Pamachius, Bishop of Rome, is called the son of Belsebub, the devil, whose death causes the reading of the will. As is the spirit in other testaments of the time, the soul and body of the deceased is bequeathed; we are not surprised to find St. Peter's Church at Rome appointed as recipient.<sup>84</sup> Ceremonies, images, crucifixes, and other like "puppet moumettry" are given to "my Dearlynges, the papists".<sup>85</sup> Bequests are also made to offenders against the people: to the usurer, gold;<sup>86</sup> to the vintner, rotten grapes;<sup>87</sup> to lawyers, a "mayle" to bring them to hell;<sup>88</sup> to dicers, false dice;<sup>89</sup> to butchers, fresh blood for stale meat;<sup>90</sup> to fishmongers, liberty to sell rotten "saltefish";<sup>91</sup> and to goldsmiths, brass and copper to mingle with rings.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup>Furnivall, Frederick J., (editor), The Wyll of the Devyll and his Last Testament, by Humphrey Powell, p. 20.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 20, 27.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 27.



The testament or will appears to have been a popular instrument through which satire could be visited upon various types who were thought to deserve ridicule. The main plan seems to have been the combination of a mock order, together with the idea of the gay though erring fool. Its humor is for the most part of the very coarse, rough type, and the composers of these popular wills evidently catered to the very commonest and lowest tastes. Their works, although being satirical, do not aim at reform as all of the pamphlets purport to do.

Another type of satirical literature, having its source in the Middle Ages, is that which deals with warnings against marriage and with tales of domestic discord. Germany began the sixteenth century with a number of learned indictments against female character; but the English literature of this period is mostly influenced by a large number of French tracts, such as Les souhaits des hommes, et les souhaiz et beautes des dames, and Les quinze joyes de mariage.<sup>93</sup> These poems accept the traditional views held concerning women, but penetrate more deeply into the problems of domestic life and show a keener appreciation of its dramatic humor. In every case we see how the readers who still delight in coarse allusions and horse-play are also attracted by character drawing and the creation of situations.<sup>94</sup>

Elizabethan interest in the controversial literature about women was doubtless stimulated by social changes taking place in England and by a political situation which gave them a queen who realized the power she might yield

<sup>93</sup> Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

over them by reason of her sex.<sup>95</sup> Social progress was making for a new interest in discussions of the relations of the sexes, as women of all classes gradually increased their liberties; but this activity and boldness of women, especially women of the middle class, aroused the ire of conservatives, who vented their displeasure in pulpit and pamphlet, and were answered by staunch defenders of the virtues of the criticized sex.

Of the several productions that appeared to arouse the partisans of the maligned sex, the best known and most popular is The Schole-house of Women, written anonymously. The author begins with a prolix disquisition on the character of women, a diatribe against the vanity, talkativeness, extravagance, faithlessness and general frailty of women from Eve to Jezabel. To start the vogue for this type of literature the author claims that he undertook his talk in consequence of a silly panegyric on females.<sup>96</sup> In the course of the poem, stories are told concerning the origin of woman's barking at man, and the uselessness of a devil in seeking to prevent a woman's speech, although it was an easy matter to give her a tongue. The author concludes that the majority of women are fastidious, sharp-tongued, quick tempered, fond of double dealing, and, when married, more inclined to gossip in one another's houses than to tend their own homes. A list of Biblical and historical characters, all women and all bad, is given, supported by quotations from Solomon and Cicero. After proclaiming his production a "mirror" that the lewd might amend their errors, he

<sup>95</sup> Wright, Louis B., Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England, p. 466.

<sup>96</sup> Anon., "The Schole House of Women", Early Popular Poetry, Vol. II, p. 55.

apologizes, saying that he purposed nothing of evil intent, but that "the masculine might heerby have some what to jest with the feminy."<sup>97</sup>

Edward Gasynhyll published a pamphlet in 1541, The Prayse of All Women, in direct answer to the Schole House. This popularity of books about women, gathering momentum for the next decade, led John Kynge, a printer of catch-penny works to bring out a new edition of the Schole House of Women in 1560, and to follow it with Edward More's A Lytle and Bryefe Treatyse called The Defence of Women, and especially of Englyshe Women, Made agaynst The Schole House of Women (1560). The Schole House had been printed by Robert Wyeir as well as by John Allde and John Kynge. Such a multiplication of copies leads to the inference that its popularity was considerable; though it is doubtful whether the favor shown to it was so much the result of the truth of the satire, as the general licentiousness of the age; the vein of coarse humor seems to have been its greatest recommendation.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, an interesting controversy originated about the work, which helped to progress the literature of the lower and middle classes. Edward More's The Defence of Women berates the anonymous author of The Schole House in the most scathing terms, even comparing his dissertation on women to the actions of Nero in relation to his own mother.<sup>99</sup> In trying to counteract the influence of the previous poem, More illustrates, by means of stories from Roman history, the faithfulness of wives in time of stress and the faithlessness of men. Stories of contemporary times are told to prove man's deceit.

<sup>97</sup>The Schole House of Women, p. 93.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., Intro, p. 52.

<sup>99</sup>More, Edward, "A Lytle and Bryefe Treatyse called The Defence of Women", Early Popular Poetry, Vol. II, p. 98.

Finally, the book is sent to women, as being a truthful story of the female's virtue.

The next important addition to this controversy, which work was also added to the two just mentioned, is The Proude Wyves Pater Noster That Wolde Go Cawe, And Undid Her Husbande, And Went Her Waye. In riming verses, the anonymous author burlesques the prayers of women who gaze about at church and envy the gay apparel of others. Compared with its precursor, The Schole House we find less humor in The Proude Wyves Pater Noster; and the latter is also less coarse in its invective and not so general in its satire. This satire-on-women combines the dialogue with the street ballad, and further adds a certain piquancy to its sentiments by associating them with divine service. This idea comes from France, and was used in La Paternostre a L'usurier and in La Credo a L'usurier, in which the money-lender interweaves the Latin of the missal with worldly reflections on wealth and business.<sup>100</sup>

In the English tract, the scene opens at church on a feast day, and amongst the women, all in their best clothes, is one who intermingles each phrase of the Pater Noster with secret prayers to gain ascendancy over her husband and to rival her neighbors' finery. Finally, she converses with another gossip, and their talk lasts till the end of the service. The friend gives forth very venomous counsels to the young wife who, on her return home, sets about putting them into effect. After having flattered her husband and then been refused the clothes and money, she breaks forth into recriminations and leaves his presence with veiled threats. The husband in alarm seeks the

<sup>100</sup>

Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 101.

curate's advice, only to return to find both his wife and all his money gone. The poem concludes with the "golden Pater Noster of devocyon" in which the author illustrates the way women should pray.

We find that during the late sixteenth century middle class writers debated the position and prerogatives of women, debated the theme of woman's goodness or wickedness, and prevailingly defended her, even while condemning the excesses of pride and extravagance which led to disasters in the citizen's economy. This early type of satire-on-women coming down to us from the Middle Ages received a new spirit because of the social progress which enhanced woman's position. In this great mass of popular literature concerning women, we can discern something more than the perennial jests and stories of the frailties or virtues of the sex. A serious undercurrent of intelligent thinking upon woman's status in a new commercial society is evident even in some of the more jocular treatises. And even though this problem, which became the theme of an increasing number of writers, was not the sole concern of middle-class men of letters, still it is clear that the taste and opinion of the commercial elements in society were having an important influence upon the development of new social ideas, as well as upon the literature in which we find these ideas reflected.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup>Wright, Louis B., op. cit., p. 507.

### CHAPTER III

THE MATTER OF THE JEST-BOOK: A C. MERY TALYS; MERY TALES, WITTIE QUESTIONS AND QUICKE ANSWERES; HOWLEGLASS; MERIE TALES OF MASTER SKELTON; THE GEYSTES OF SKOGGAN. THE PICARESQUE NOVEL: NASHE'S THE UNFORTUNATE TRAVELLER, OR THE LIFE OF JACKE WILTON.

A large number of Latin Facetiae appeared in print from the pens of the fifteenth and sixteenth century scholars. The style of narrative is strikingly similar to the collection of Exempla, with which the Latinists, thanks to their semi-ecclesiastical education would be familiar.<sup>1</sup> These bon-mots and anecdotes diverted the student by touches of common life or by flashes of classical wit. Their triviality ensured relaxation but the scholar's attention was held by an appeal to his sense of paradox and epigram.

Ever since the Franciscans and Dominicans had used apologues to enforce their exhortations, collections of Exempla had been compiled from such sources as Vitae Patrum and the Legends of the Saints.<sup>2</sup> The sixteenth century gave great impulse to the half cynical, half amused indulgence which had always greeted the triumphs of the knave, the blunders of the fool, the flashes of the quick-witted and the innumerable touches of often undignified nature. The minstrel and jester made a livelihood, and sometimes rose to fame by gratifying this unromantic curiosity in life; but the publication of Latin Facetiae had shown how their place could be taken by jest-books printed in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Routh, Harold V., op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 103

native tongue. Medieval fabliaux and the Eastern tales before them were the Renaissance jest book's true progenitors. The jester, like the anti-hero of legend, emerged from folklore.

Early jest collections in Italy, France, England, and Germany drew largely on each other and even more on the inexhaustible stores of the past, eschewing romantic and religious sentiment and reproducing only wit, ribaldry, satire and realism. The earliest English jest-book, previous to most of the German miscellanies, was in print by about 1526 under the title of A C. Mery Talys. This miscellany covers practically the same ground as the fabliaux, treating of the profligacy of married women, the meanness and voluptuousness of the priesthood, the superstition of the peasant, the resources of untutored ingenuity, and the comedy of the fool outwitted by the knave. At various times this collection has been attributed to John Heywood and to Sir Thomas More. In actuality it is only another composite series of fabliaux and similar tales, taken from miscellaneous sources, including the Decameron, the Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, Poggio's and Heinrich Bebel's Facetiae, Sacchetti's Novellette, Till Eulenspiegel, and other magazines of folk tale.<sup>3</sup> Further, it has a peculiarly interesting link with the Gesta Romanorum and the other repositories of tales with a moral. The absurd interpretations attached to the tales must have been intended as a parody of that very ridiculous feature in the preceding story books.

Although, as the title indicates, this collection was composed of one hundred tales, we find a great many mutilated and therefore not readable.

<sup>3</sup> Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 288.

The whole collection was accidentally rescued from oblivion in a strange way by the Reverend J. J. Conybeare, who discovered its being used as a binder, about the time of its appearance, to form the pasteboard to another book.<sup>4</sup> Although many leaves had been mutilated, a larger fragment than otherwise remained because fortunately more than one copy had been used for the reinforcement. Because no other copy has since occurred, we must be content with the present fragment, which so excellently illustrates the type of jest and joke in Tudor times.

The stories are concerned with several different topics: the profligacy of married women is illustrated in ten of the stories, while woman's quick answer, sometimes of a very coarse and indelicate type, and then again of a very ingenious and clever persuasion, is exemplified in ten other stories; the priesthood is made the butt of at least a dozen jokes, most of which center either on the profligacy and voluptuousness of the manner of living of the clergy, or on the evident lack of their learning and intelligence; in sixteen of the tales we are made acquainted with the resources of untutored ingenuity; and the comedy of the fool outwitted by the knave is played in ten of the anecdotes; the superstition of the peasant provides humor in three of four tales; and nine or ten stories deal simply with the evident stupidity of "natural" fools. A few of the tales are really not stories at all, but merely clever, sharp answers.

The sixtieth tale<sup>5</sup> in the collection is identical with the satirical tale.

<sup>4</sup>Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), Shakespeare Jest-Books, Vol. I, Intro., p.ii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 87-88.



previously mentioned, from the Schole House of Women. The devil had no trouble to provide a wife with a tongue, but he and all the others in hell could not silence her, so natural is it for women to speak. In the same classification we can place tales eight and nine in the series.<sup>6</sup> One relates that a woman followed her fourth husband's bier, and wept because prior to this occasion when she followed the various bodies to church she was already sure of her next husband; but at this time no provision was made. The next is very closely related to this one. The widow at the Mass of Requiem for her husband is approached by a suitor whom she must refuse, for she has already been betrothed to another.

The thirty-first<sup>7</sup> anecdote not only illustrates the resources of untutored ingenuity but it likewise confirms the attitude of some of the populace toward the clergy.

A friar, who was given to eating more than his share of food, to the discomfort of his boy-servant, spoke one Sunday on the miracle of our Lord in feeding five thousand people with three fishes and five loaves of bread. To the consternation of the preacher and the amusement of the congregation, the boy cried aloud, "By my faith, were there no freres there?"

That the Welchmen were perennial material for jests is evident from the fact that several stories center about them. In one anecdote,<sup>8</sup> we are told that after Christ's passion many men resided in heaven that had done little

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-105.

to deserve the honor—particularly Welchmen, who with their perpetual chatter troubled the others. Finally, Peter was commanded by God to rid heaven of them. Therefore, the gate-keeper cried aloud outside, "Cause bobbe" (roasted cheese). The Welchmen swarmed out of heaven to receive the prize, after which Peter reentered, locking the doors.

This very earliest extant edition of English jests illustrates the love of the people not only for stories but also for realism of a very coarse and crude type, the greater part of the selections being too vulgar for repetition. That the stories have the elements of the fabliaux, together with their share of wit, ribaldry, and realism is all too evident; but in them we observe the germs of interest in actuality, and all show evidences of a certain homely satire and a keen observation of men and manners.

Within ten years after the publication of the Mery Talys, a collection of still briefer Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres was being circulated among the lower classes in England. The latter part of the title refers to the repartee and sharp sayings that were a strong feature in most of the pieces, which were otherwise not very different from those in the earlier compilation. It is essentially a people's book and closely akin to German jest-books, such as Bebel's Facetiae, Johannes Pauli's Schimpfund Ernst (1522), and the Pfarrer von Kalenberg, which had come into vogue at the time of the Renaissance and were soon to be translated or plundered for the benefit of English readers.<sup>9</sup>

Although few or none of the anecdotes in the A C. Mery Talys seem to have a definitely literary source, we find that Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and

<sup>9</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 292.

Quicke Answeres draws distinctly from Diogenes, Laertius, Aesop and Plutarch; and there is consequently a corresponding decrease in vigor and effect.<sup>10</sup>

Of the one hundred forty tales in this collection, we find that fewer than fifteen may be actually classed as examples of the vulgarity of the age. The compilation may be divided into anecdotes and repartee. In the nine years since the publication of A. C. Mery Talys we note some manifest changes. The intellectual calibre of the stories has improved immensely; but this seems to have come about as a result of a refinement in the material during which process a great deal of the native spark and effect has been destroyed.

At least ten stories convey no point at all and seem colorless. Twenty-five of the anecdotes have their sources in history, mostly that concerning the ancient Greeks and Romans; these all illustrate the wisdom of the persons described. In a dozen of the stories, native wisdom and proverbs are illustrated by the use of examples which we recognize as common folk-material. The sharp wit of the "natural" fool is made premium of in fifteen of the stories, while another ten give accounts of the resources of this same type. The stupidity of country rustics, servants, and dolts provides amusement in twenty of the tales, but this is off-set by accounts of the outwitting of "would-be-clever" persons in twelve of the tales. The stupidity of the clergy provides material for only six stories; and in only two tales do we hear accounts of the voluptuousness of friars. A very few stories make capital of the fool's being outwitted by the knave; and in two or three the laughing at another's

<sup>10</sup> Mann, Francis O., (editor), The Works of Thomas Deloney, Intro., p. xxii.

mistake provides the jest. Satirization of the professions, especially law and medicine, is aptly illustrated by the stories portraying the corruptness of lawyers and the stupidity of physicians. In only a very few of the stories is the satire of women a prominent feature, and even then the invective is very mild.

The well known story illustrating the foolishness of trying to please everybody is numbered among the collection. The story of the man and the ass<sup>11</sup> illustrates the employment of anecdote to bring out a moral or to stress a proverb. The man was first blamed because the little boy and he drove the animal before them. Then the father walked, allowing the son to ride. This procedure also brought criticism upon him. Finally, they ended by carrying the animal, only to be blamed as fools. In disgust they threw the beast into the water and went home, bearing in mind that henceforth they would aim to please no one.

The story centering about the corrupt lawyer<sup>12</sup> illustrates not only the use of satire, but also the employment of repartee. The judge appointed to settle a dispute between a rich and a poor man was given a glass of oil, as a bribe, by the poor man; but the rich man presented him with a hog. When the judgment was made in favor of his rival, the poor man complained, saying that he had given him oil; only to receive the rejoinder that the hog overthrew the glass, spilling the oil.

---

<sup>11</sup>Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), "Merry Tales, Witty Questions and Quicke Answeres", Shakespeare Jest-Books, Vol. I, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

The spirit of the age and its estimation of women is clearly exemplified in the following tale:<sup>13</sup> A young woman sorrowing for her dying husband was told by her father that he had provided her with another. She appeared greatly displeased; but while at dinner, immediately after the funeral, she whispered to her father, "Where is the man?" An extra moral is added to tell us that this tale illustrates the duration of a woman's sorrow.

Demosthenes' defense of a maid is one of the more refined tales, of a high calibre.<sup>14</sup> Two men we are told had left a sum of money with a maiden on condition that she would not deliver it again unless both of them came together for it. Later one came, saying that his friend was dead. She delivered the money to him; but the other one returned later. As she was in a predicament, Demosthenes defended her. He said that she agreed to return the money when both came together, but since the gentleman could not locate his friend, the girl was absolved of all blame.

These tales lack the evident coarseness of the first compilation of jests, just as they lack their vigor and effect. As the temper of the Age became more literary, the isolated joke belonging more distinctly to the oral literature of an age when books were rare lacked the continuity and size demanded by the readers. For a collection of jokes to become a humorous book, some sort of constructional frame-work is necessary. This was provided by Germany in her jest-books.

In no other chapter of her literary intercourse with Germany did England

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

contrive to appropriate so large a proportion of the total produce as in the material of the Jest-book, where the acquisition was of least value.<sup>15</sup> If Markolf, by far the most interesting of all, has left but few and scanty traces, Ulenspiegel, the most repulsive, met with a reception in the England of Elizabeth only exceeded by that which it had already found in the France of Francis I.<sup>16</sup> No copy has ever been found of the Low-Saxon original of Ulenspiegel, evident traces of which remain in the early High German versions. The first extant versions take us to Strassburg, where in 1515 the earliest known edition, and in 1519 that till recently regarded as such and attributed to Murner, were published. From Strassburg it passed to Augsburg (ed. 1540) and Erfurt (ed. 1532-38) and northwards to Koln; thence to Antwerp, and from Antwerp to Paris and London. The Antwerp edition—a cento containing about one-half the stories of the original—was the basis of the French version of 1532 and its successors; and of the English version printed, probably between 1548 and 1560, by William Copland.<sup>17</sup>

It was, therefore, only a mutilated Ulenspiegel which Copland introduced to his country men. But Copland himself added a copy of verses, which deserve notice as the first indication of the impression made by Ulenspiegel upon an English mind. Instead of adding another to Ulenspiegel's feats, they introduce him holding a solemn disputation, in which for the first time in his life he is distinctly worsted. The undisguised fellow-feeling, with which his

<sup>15</sup> Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

pranks had been told, passes abruptly into stern reproof; the genial adventurer who compiled the History is suddenly replaced by a serious, staid London citizen, who doubtless wrote with a purely moral aim, and a desire to put the antidote within easy reach of the poison.<sup>18</sup> In England, Ulenspiegel gravitated at once to the class of native jesters to whom he properly belonged. Under his English name he lost all foreign associations, and became an inseparable member of the brotherhood of Scogins and Skeltons, Robin Goodfellows and Robin Hoods, from whom however he was always clearly distinguished by the enigmatic symbol of the "Owl on fist" and "Glass at wrist" with which he was invariably represented.<sup>19</sup>

This type of jest-book was the first of a series which placed the jokes and pranks on the market associated with some character famous for humor or knavery. Correlated cheats of the earlier collections had suggested, as the connecting link between them, the cheater himself. His name was that of one who perhaps had really lived and won a reputation for cleverness in dissimulation, although often the fact of actual existence was disregarded and a fictitious name was substituted. Here, then, from the deeds that he performed the doer gradually emerged; and this correlation of tricks reached its best and earliest development in Germany in the Til Eulenspiegel of Thomas Murner, in which the rogue of fiction began to draw breath, even if for a long time yet he could not venture to dispute an equal share of attention with that bestowed upon his actions, much less think to make them subservient to an interest in him for his own sake.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Herford, Charles H., op. cit., p. 286.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>20</sup> Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Romances of Roguery, Part I, p. 8.

The existence of Eulenspiegel is certain.<sup>21</sup> The names of his parents are Saxon names, and the name of Eulenspiegel appears as early as 1337, being the name of a widow living at B—, and again in 1473 in conjunction with another name. The widow Eulenspiegel has ever been supposed to be the mother of our hero. Among the objects of interest which remain to the present time, a testimony of the real existence of Eulenspiegel is the grave stone at Mallen, the place assigned to him as his last resting place, both by historical tradition and in the folk-book.

Now, around the life of this person are centered the tricks, freely borrowed from predecessors with both hands and without scruple; but the only arrangement the work makes of appropriated facetiae consists in grouping those applicable to Til's youth, and those concerning his sickness and death, and between these two extremes recounting in order his tricks before sovereigns and his stratagems against ecclesiastics, artisans, peasants, and innkeepers.<sup>22</sup>

The first adventure is concerned with the birth of Tyll Owlglass, our hero, in the village of Amptlen. Finally, in the third adventure, we are made acquainted with the death of Owlglass' father, and the consequent poverty of the wife and child. Immediately he commences his tricks, disregarding his mother's pleas that he learn a handicraft because he does not wish to be counted a hypocrite as well as a knave. Our hero travels, receiving the positions of parish clerk, doctor's helper, baker, and worker for the Count of

<sup>21</sup> Machenzie, K. R. H., (editor), Master Tyll Owlglass, Appendix B., p. 304.

<sup>22</sup> Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Romances of Roguery, Part I, p. 9.



Anhalt, in all of which he is requested to leave because of his knaveries. Meanwhile Owlglass visits the Kings of Denmark and Poland, the Duke of Lunenberg, the Landgrave of Hessen, and the rector and masters of the University of Prague. We find him also in Rome in consultation with the Pope, and in the many provinces of Germany, sections of France, and territories around the Baltic sea, in all of which places he becomes well known because of his pranks. But in the last few adventures our hero sick, and deserted by friends, is visited by his mother at Mollen, where he dies and is buried, the coffin by a strange mishap standing on end. The last adventure in the book proclaims the deep meaning and truthful lesson which may be gathered by studying the life of Owlglass, but the book should cause mirth. The author concludes by advising us to use our talents to the greater glory and honor of God since, if the subject of the book had not been a knave, with his wit and ingenious brain, he might have been strong in good and noble things.

The type of stratagem in which Owlglass delighted is illustrated in the twenty-eighth adventure.<sup>23</sup> He visits the Landgrave of Hessen, pretending to be a great painter. Soon he is appointed to portray on the castle wall the story of the Landgrave's family. After having been given one hundred marks with which to buy colors, and several weeks of quiet in which to complete his work, he finally exhibits the painting, advertising the fact that those ignobly born would see nothing. The Landgrave, his wife, and eight maidens exulted over the work, while a woman-fool openly proclaimed that she saw nothing.

<sup>23</sup> Mackenzie, K. R. H., (editor), Master Tyll Owlglass, pp. 86-93.

The court also advanced to the showing and they likewise praised the blank canvas for fear of their being considered ignobly born. Owlglass received an additional one hundred marks and departed to other lands.

The thirty-third adventure<sup>24</sup> was previously embodied in Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres. At the great University of Erfurt, Owlglass promised that if given twenty years to complete his work he would teach an ass to read. After Owlglass received some of the money he said to himself that since there are three to the contract, the rector, himself, and the animal, one will probably die during the interval. The death of the rector soon followed, and Owlglass departed with his money.

Up till the time of his death our hero acts in character. In the division of his goods, he wills one part to friends, the next to the town council to pay its debts, and the last to the priest of the town. After four weeks the treasure box is opened, and it is discovered that stones are packed there. The attached moral relates that any treasure is no greater than stones, and a lusty frame and a cheerful heart are the best riches.<sup>25</sup>

We are told that this book, the first of its Kind, was translated into French, Dutch, Danish, Polish, and Hebrew and was printed on every kind of paper, good and bad.<sup>26</sup> Its success on the continent soon persuaded English compilers to associate their jests likewise with some character famous for humor or knavery. Thus we have the Merie Tales of Master Skelton in which a collection of extravagant anecdotes, associated with the laureate's person-

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-103.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 272-273.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xxi.

ality and his rectorship of Diss, is used to introduce clerical burlesque. In 1566 Thomas Colwell paid four pence for his licence to print A boke intituled Sertin Mery tayles of Skeltons, and there is little doubt that the tract appeared in the same year.<sup>27</sup> The stories are strung together without any regard to order of time, some referring to the ~~early~~ part of Skelton's career, while others relate incidents in his clerical life at Diss in Norfolk. It may be desirable to observe that neither Skelton, Scoggin, Tarlton, nor Peele, had any concern whatever in the authorship of the jests or tales which pass under their names, and which were for the most part the compositions of hack writers ready to avail themselves of the popularity of any name or of any incident to replenish their pockets.

The Merie Tales of Master Skelton are fifteen in number among which we find the usual clever stratagems, coarse anecdotes, and witty answers. Tale six has been taken directly from tale forty of the A C. Mery Talys. Master Skelton about to be disciplined by the bishop presented the latter with two capons which the bishop ignored. But Skelton upon the bishop's final acceptance of the gift told him of their names, Alpha, the first that he ever did present, and Omega, the last he will ever present to his supervisor.

Tale eight also centers about Skelton's clerical life. A Fryar wishing to preach at Diss asked permission of Skelton but was refused. The friar having the bull from the Bishop of Rome ascended the pulpit in Skelton's church, without leave. But Skelton embarrassed him before the congregation by

<sup>27</sup> Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), Shakespeare Jest-Books, Vol. II, Intro., p. 2.

calling out, "A calf hath gotten a bull. This fryere being a calfe hath gotten a bulle of the bishop of Rome." Never after did the fryer presume to preach at Diss.

The thirteenth tale is the longest and most interesting story in the collection. Master Skelton's miller, having deceived Skelton many times by playing the thief, is required to perform many daring deeds before being forgiven by his master. While the master is at table the miller is required to steal a cup; he removes sheets from the bed while Skelton is sleeping; and at the command of Skelton he steals the parson out of bed at midnight, and by pretending to be St. Peter forces him into a bag which he finally hangs from the chimney of his house. The last feat, the most difficult, is performed by the miller through the employment of a corpse. The miller takes Skelton's gelding from the stable while two men are watching it. By removing the head of the corpse and placing it on a pole which he thrusts through the floor of the stable to deceive the two watchers he is able, when they hasten to Skelton with the head of the person they thought to be the miller, to steal the gelding. The miller is then forgiven by Skelton since he excels all known thieves, but he must repent and amend his way of living.

Although the fifteen anecdotes relate certain incidents in the life of the poet laureate we find that in several the deeds of others are exposed. Two portray the native stupidity of peasants; one connected with Skelton is of the lowest Fabliau type; four relate the mischief of Skelton in much the same manner as the earliest jest-books; while five employ sharp answers as a means of outwitting those that set about criticizing the cleric; and two show the value of strategy to promote oneself. That Skelton's life was of a

profligate type underlies three or four of the stories.

These stories are placed in the collection in a very haphazard manner, no attempt being made to arrange them in a chronological or biographical form. Compared with the next group of jests, The Merie Tales of Master Skelton is a hasty compilation in the old manner. The most perfect type of biographical jest-book was registered in 1565-6, under the title The Geystes of Skoggan. These jests were gathered together by Andrew Borde, Doctor of Physic, who died in 1549, and some of whose numerous works came during his lifetime from the press of Robert Wyer.<sup>28</sup> There is no doubt that Skoggin was a real person. He was a gentleman, poor but learned, an M. A. of Oxford, and jester to Edward IV, and his name throughout the sixteenth century was one upon which to hang tales.<sup>29</sup>

In the arrangement of these jokes of Skoggin, a regular chronological sequence is followed for the first time. The story begins when he is a student at Oxford and follows him through his pranks at court, his banishment to France, his return to England, his tricks to force himself into favor again, and, finally, his death and burial. Amazing tales of dishonesty, insolence, and knavery are skilfully woven into a continuous narrative marking definite progress in the scamp's career. These stories have the same flavor as those in the early A C. Mery Talys. Mischief and ribaldry are rife in almost every one; the wit and intellectual quickness of the Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres have been replaced by a sincere enjoyment felt in the report of knaveries, vulgar stories and actions, and accounts of the outwitting of famous personages by a rogue.

<sup>28</sup>Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), Shakespeare Jest-Books, Vol. II, Intro., p.38.

<sup>29</sup>Hume, Martin, Spanish Influence on English Literature, p. 158.

That the compiler took his material from every and any source is evidenced by the fact that six of the seventy-six anecdotes have been copied from A C. Mery Talys. The sixth tale in the series,<sup>30</sup> relating how "Jack made of two eggs three", is similar to the sixty-seventh anecdote in A C. Mery Talys; the fifteenth tale<sup>31</sup> concerning the priest who celebrated Mass for Christ's soul is also copied from that collection, being identical with anecdote eighty-one; Skelton's collection as well as A C. Mery Talys make capital of the seventeenth tale in the series,<sup>32</sup> reporting the outwitting of the bishop by a priest accused of misconduct. The common wit of the untutored, reported in tale forty-four, has been taken from the account in the eighty-second story of the A C. Mery Talys; Skelton's compilations as well as the A C. Mery Talys provide the basis for the fifty-fifth tale in the series;<sup>34</sup> Skoggin's outwitting of the draper, an interesting account of the perpetration of dishonesty, is taken from the thirty-ninth anecdote in A C. Mery Talys;<sup>35</sup> whereas the wit and quick answer of anecdote sixty<sup>36</sup> saw its birth in the twelfth tale of Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quick Answeres.

Although this collection of jester's jokes receives its material from the same sources as previous collections, it is nevertheless a decided advancement

<sup>30</sup> Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), Shakespeare Jest-Books, Vol. II, pp. 62-63.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-80.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-117.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-140.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-141.

over them, and it marks the first manifestation in England of the picaresque taste in fiction. The adaptation of the quasi-biographical arrangement marks the advance in England toward the connected biographical rogue tale which originated in the Spanish Lazarillo de Tormes. Such tales as The Geystes of Skoggan and Howleglass, with their chronological sequence and their material of knavery are a link between the jester and the adventurer whose career was becoming a part of the people's reading. Between the one and the other there is indeed a wide disparity, for the Spanish anti-hero has finally emerged from his acts as a distinct character in a real and interesting environment, while the jester is only a name, the souvenir of a traditional rogue to whom arbitrarily have come to be attributed ingenious cheats gathered everywhere.<sup>37</sup>

The picaresque novel is the comic biography of an anti-hero who makes his way in the world through the service of masters, satirizing their personal faults, as well as their trades and professions. Historically the literature of roguery arose in Spain in the middle of the sixteenth century, and La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) really marks the birth of the genre. In form Lazarillo takes its method of satirizing professions from the medieval reviews of estates, and its scheme of describing society through the service of masters from Apuleius.<sup>38</sup> Its spirit is due in part to a literary recoil, the hero giving place to the anti-hero, and in part to social conditions, for the Spanish decadence was beginning.

<sup>37</sup> Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Romances of Roguery, Part I, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, The Literature of Roguery, Vol. I, p. 7.

The work bore no author's name, although tradition since 1607 has assigned it to the statesman and poet, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.<sup>39</sup> Its rogue jauntily recounts his rise through service with a blind beggar, a miserly priest, a proud hidalgo, an indulgence seller, a busybody friar, a painter, a chaplain, and an alguazil, to the dignities of town crier and complacent husband of an archpriest's mistress.<sup>40</sup> The book, Spanish to the core, is an inversion of the chivalric romance, with its resplendent hero and high-sounding achievements. Spain at that time had been ruined and demoralized by a gigantic war. The whole country was in a state of destitution, large numbers of the gentry being reduced to miserable shifts, maintaining appearances on next to nothing, forced to keep body and soul together by mean pretences; while a large proportion of the lower classes were rogues and vagabonds without disguise.<sup>41</sup> Such was the state of things which formed the background of the picaresque novels. We find in them the comedy and satire, emanating from despair.

Now, Mendoza's story itself attracted much notice when it first appeared in London, and affords a parallel to The Unfortunate Traveller of Thomas Nashe. In form, the latter resembles the picaresque type, but the elements of Nashe's work represent a spontaneous English growth. The Spanish rogue-novel was the outcome of a widespread beggary brought about by the growth of militarism and the decline of industry, but similar conditions prevailed in Elizabethan

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 48.



England, and the conditions which produced Lazarillo de Tormes produced The Unfortunate Traveller.<sup>42</sup> As regards Nashe, the matter and design of his novel would be quite naturally suggested by the materials of his pamphlets (to be discussed later), and possibly, by reminiscences of his travels; while his scorn of romances accounts for his choice of the realistic form. When compared with the Spanish picaresque type The Unfortunate Traveller will be found to have many points in common.

In both there is a firm grasp of the realities of life, penetrating observation, and forceful expression; humor is mixed with satire, and the aim is that of entertainment rather than reform.<sup>43</sup> The Spanish picaro generally belonged to the lowest class and was accustomed to confine his attentions to Spanish society, but Jacke Wilton, a page, moves farther afield and reviews no less expansive a scene than that of Western Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century. This brings us to the contention that in writing his work Nashe owed little to Lazarillo, but much to contemporary realistic prose and his own experience.<sup>44</sup>

As we have said before, the picaresque genre found a soil prepared for it in England; in the jest-books and merry tales which everyone delighted in, and more particularly in attempts to string episodes of cheating and horseplay into a continuous story, like Scoggin's Geystes, there is something parallel to the Spanish work, of native origin. In 1594, when Nashe was twenty-seven,

<sup>42</sup> Atkins, J. W. H., "Elizabethan Prose Fiction", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 414.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>44</sup> Mann, Francis O., (editor), The Works of Thomas Deloney, Intro., p. xxv.

The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jacke Wilton appeared, the greatest example of English picaresque literature until the time of Defoe. The work starts when Jacke was a boy, in attendance upon the king at the siege of Tournay in 1512. His first prank is played on the army victualler whom he terrifies into distributing his stores, by insinuating to him that he is suspected by the King of treason. Jack is soundly whipped but this deters him not in the least, for soon he sends a captain to kill the French king, in revenge for the loss of his money to the said captain, through dishonest dealings. The captain is chastised by the French and Jack is satisfied. These trickes akin to, but not borrowed from, the jest-books are followed by what may be genuine reminiscences of travel in Germany and Italy.

Jack appears at Munster in time to enjoy the conflict between the Emperor and the Anabaptists. Then returning to England he becomes a servant to the Earl of Surrey; after which he sets out for Italy. Passing through Rotterdam, Jacke and his master encounter Erasmus and Sir Thomas More. At Wittenberg they witness an academic paginat, and see Luther in disputation with Carolostadius; later, they meet Cornelius Agrippa, who shows to Surrey and Jacke in a glass the Lady Geraldine weeping for her lover. As they near Italy, the master and his servant change clothes and stations. Their adventures are many and varied, among which they are confined to prison, where Jacke meets a magnifico's wife, Diamante, with whom he elopes. He then masquerades through Italy as the Earl, after having escaped from his master. Later they meet, and the Earl enters a tournament on behalf of Geraldine.

Surrey being recalled to England, Jacke and Diamante proceed to Rome, which is in the throes of a terrible plague. This condition is the keynote

of the latter part of the novel, which departs from the light-hearted picaresque spirit. Murder and theft are rife, Diamante is kidnapped, and Jacke, mistakenly seized, is only saved at the gallows by a banished English earl, who embraces this opportunity for advising the rogue against the folly of seeking in other lands what England already beautifully possesses.

But Jacke's misfortunes are innumerable, for that very night he is captured by Zadoch, a Jew, into whose cellar he has tumbled. Juliana, purported to be the Pope's mistress, saves him by securing the banishment of all Jews. Finally, the Roman villanies end after Jack and Diamante escape with the treasures of Juliana, who, having drunk poison by mistake, dies.

In Bologna, Jacke is present at the execution of Cutwolfe, a brother to Bartol, who had been killed by Esdras. The method of Cutwolfe's revenge is rather terrible. He bound Esdras, making him abjure God and swear oaths of self-commitment to the devil, without condition, praying God never to have mercy on him. Then as the victim began his blasphemous abjurations, Cutwolfe shot him in the throat, hoping thereby to destroy his soul as well as his body. Finally, for this deed the murderer is cruelly executed.

This tragedy incited our "hero" to a straight life; he performed alms-deeds, left the "Sodom of Italy" and arrived at the King of England's Campe between Ardes and Guines in France. On the Field of the Cloth of Gold, accordingly, Nashe leaves his rogue, reformed.

From our resume of the work, we note Nashe's use of the terrible, his love of low-life, his burlesque of romance, his penchant for practical jests, and his very evident anti-Italianate spirit. Jacke is throughout the light-hearted, adventurous page who spends his time employing his wits to live

merrily, going through all worldly vicissitudes, thus lending himself to his creator's purpose of gaining the opportunity to describe and satirize all classes of society.

Professor Raleigh tells us that as Nashe was the first in the field with a realistic "novel", so also did he remain, for a good deal more than a century, the last: he had no disciples; no one improved on or imitated this way of writing; he abandoned it himself, and fiction developed on other lines.<sup>45</sup> Thus The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jacke Wilton stands alone among the productions of a many-sided and vigorous age, and among the "novels" of that age must certainly be counted the most vigorous and brilliant.

---

<sup>45</sup> Raleigh, Walter, The English Novel, p. 86.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONNIE-CATCHING PAMPHLETS

From the previous chapters in this study we readily see how large a reading public still remained untouched by the Renaissance and continued to enjoy medieval literature borrowing from the continent. But at the same time the great social changes of the sixteenth century were inspiring a large number of quite different tracts. Trade was encouraged by both Henrys and the growing taste for luxury which ruined the gentry, enriched the commercial classes.

Besides neglecting the claims of good fellowship the nouveau riche introduced methods of commercial competition into land speculation. Thus neither lords of the manor nor freehold tenants hesitated to abolish the small homesteads that had supported the yeomanry of baronial England.<sup>1</sup> Evicted tenants were thus forced to become vagabonds or seek a livelihood in manufacturing industries, thereby further disorganizing the labor market; and the reckless extravagance of the court raised the general cost of living, while the debasement of the currency and increase of taxation made poverty more acute.<sup>2</sup> This period which extended from the close of the fifteenth century through the whole of the sixteenth was a time of rapid change in many aspects of society, but one of the most prominent characteristics of this period, and one which strikes us with a certain surprise, is the widespread and continued

---

<sup>1</sup>Routh, Harold V., "The Progress of Social Literature in Tudor Times", Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

suffering of the great mass of the people.<sup>3</sup>

The "sturdy beggar" was at that time a comparatively new phenomenon. The numbers of wandering beggars, vagabonds, or "strong thieves", for these classes shaded into one another, became greater and greater through the whole of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth, until the long series of attempts at the solution of the problem reached their culmination in the Poor Law of Elizabeth, of 1601.<sup>4</sup> By this act, those who refused to work were to be compelled to do so, and Houses of Correction were established in which idlers could be employed and the disorderly punished.

The literature growing out of this class of society was given an added impetus in the works of Robert Greene. Previously the vagabond classes had been popularized by Awdley, but Greene purports to write of them primarily to warn country people against the snares of London. It is the wiles of panders and courtesans, card-sharpers and swindlers that he undertakes to reveal. His work we note as the initiation of the revelations of life in the underworld, which were so alluring to Elizabethan readers that a whole literature of pamphlets descriptive of rogues and vagabonds was produced by writers who set forth their exposures of the lives, habits, and language of these fuffians as discoveries profitable to the people.

Greene was one of the most original specimens of the unfortunate men who in the time of Elizabeth attempted to live by their pens. He was as remarkable for his extravagances of conduct as for his talents, sometimes

<sup>3</sup> Cheyney, Edward P., "Social Changes in England in the Sixteenth Century as Reflected in Contemporary Literature", Publications of the University of Pennsylvania Series in Philology, Literature and Archaeology, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

gaining money and fame by the success of his writings, sometimes sinking into abject poverty and consorting with the outcasts of society.<sup>5</sup> Of all the writers of the Elizabethan period he is perhaps the one whose life and character we can best picture to ourselves; for in his last years he wrote autobiographical tales which are valuable as a picture of the times. They really amount to the "Scenes de la Vie de Boheme" of Elizabethan England. This type of life also lends a sort of verisimilitude to his "rogue" pamphlets.

These were called Conny-catching Tracts, and a conny-catcher was the term applied to the "fleecers" of the common people. Now, whether his first object be, as he professes, to put the innocent on their guard against the rogues, or whether his tales be not constructed to awaken an unhealthy interest in this low life rather than to enforce a lesson in prudence, is uncertain. The interest for us is not of a sociological nature, for the superficiality is all too evident, but their qualities of affording entertainment cannot be overlooked.

The first of these tracts appeared in 1591, published as A Notable Discovery of Coosnage. It opens with an epistle of eight pages "To The Reader", in the course of which Greene tells of his plan to expose the deceits practised upon "Yong gentlemen, Marchants, Apprentises, Farmers, and plain Countreyemen" by the conny-catchers, the sly confidence men of the Capital.

There are two chief abuses in London: the art of conny-catching, deceit at cards; and the art of cross-biting, or the extortion of money from victims by the pretended or real husbands of the courtezans. Greene gives a brief

<sup>5</sup>Jusserand, Jean J., The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, p. 151.

account of the origin of card-playing, speaks of the evils done to innocent persons by the cheaters at cards and develops his Epistle with an explanation of the old Barnard's Law, or the process of cheating at cards. Four persons were required to perform their coosning commodity: The "Taker-up" insinuates himself into the man's acquaintance and later escorts him to taverns. With him goes the "Verser", a man of more "worshippe" than the first cheater. The third member of the group, the "Barnard", enters the company as they are seated. He appears to be very prosperous and does not mind giving the appearance of being careless with money. The "Verser" is taught a new game of cards by the "Barnard"; the wagers are constantly increased; the countryman is drawn into the game, and he loses everything. Now, the "Rutter", the fourth member, stands at the door, drawing his sword and picking a quarrel "at his owne shadow", if necessary, while a crowd gathers, during which the "Barnard" escapes. The whole group meet later and the ill-gotten gains are divided.

The new art of conny-catching surpasses this in subtlety; and although Greene has been threatened by the hacksters of that "filthie facultie", if he set their practices in print, he does not fear them. Thus he closes his "Epistle", promising to expose the deceits of these rogues.

The body of the pamphlet consists of setting forth the art of conny-catching (a retelling in different terms of the Barnard's Law) illustrated by two tales; and of the manner in which the city harlots aid in "crosbiting" the silly connies, together with the story of a victim who turned the tables. The exposure of these two vices was not quite enough to fill up the pamphlet; in conclusion, then, there is the illustration of a deceit in no way related to the other two, the evil practices of the sellers of coals, illustrated



by two tales.

In the art of conny-catching, three parties are necessary: The "Setter" draws the victim, a conie, to drink with him. The "Verser" often gives his services to the cause by pretending to be acquainted with the countryman's neighbors. Then as the conversation among the three continues, the game of cards is introduced, and the poor countryman through the tricks of the others is "slicked" by the "Barnackle", the originator of the game.

Greene's stories are of interest because of the elements of humor which supersede the sociological purpose. With his fingers on the public pulse, he never cracks a smile as he sets about to expose the vices of London, never acknowledging for a moment that he is not the social investigator he pretends to be.

The shoemaker of St. Edmund's Burie, having been cozened by one of these wretches, being exposed by the author, is given a chance to administer the punishment, which he does, by making the conie-catcher pay an ounce of blood for every pound of silver stolen.

The captain of the ship, who was "crosbitten" by a harlot and her husband, not only forces them to return the ill-gotten money but also exacts charges from them, threatening to report the deed to the constable.

The colliers are also punished by those they sought to deceive, one of them receiving a beating from several whom he had previously deceived, after which he is cast out of the house, with neither his coal sacks nor his money.

This feature of supplying illustrative stories is elaborated upon in successive pamphlets, the Second Part of Connie-catching increasing the number, while the Thirde Part consists entirely of stories—with no new "laws"

added whatever.

In the Second Part of Connie-Catching which was also licensed the same day as the previous pamphlet, Greene sets about relating the "discovery of certain wondrous coosenages, either superficialle past over, or utterlie untoucht in the first". It reveals the Prigging Law (horse stealing), the Vincents Law (deceit at bowling), a discussion of the Nip (who cuts purses) and the Foist (who steals with his hand), the Lifting Law (larceny), the Courbing Law (hooking linen out of windows), and the Blacke Arte (picking of locks). The pamphlet contains nine tales.

With much zest, we are told how a miller had his purse cut in the Newgate market. An old "nippe" and young "nippe" quarrel during the course of which the young one throws meal at the other, who asks the miller's help in dusting it away. The process being completed, all too late, the miller discovers his purse has been stolen.

In much the same manner, a farmer loses his purse. A "Foist" fainting, a farmer donates his services, only to realize later that he has been "cozened" of his money.

The Courbing Law is represented by the anecdote which illustrates a rogue of this type making love to a maid so that he will become acquainted with the house; and meanwhile, on one of these visits, another courber robs the house.

But to sell his work, Greene had to accommodate his readers' desire to see themselves avenged on these rogues. One of the Courbers working at his trade was discovered by the porter of the house who lifted the articles off the hook while the other servant went for help. The two rascals were cap-

tured, imprisoned in the porter's lodge, receiving forty blows apiece for their misdeeds.

The final tale, purporting to be "true and merry", relates the story of a Knight who sent a Tinker to carry a letter to the gaoler, which the Tinker does. The letter incriminates the messenger, who was reported as a picklock by the Knight, and hanged at Lancaster at the next sessions.

But in the Thirde and Last Part of Conny-Catching (1592) we have a distinct advance made toward pure fiction, and the beggar-book features are dropped. In accordance with the author's aim the first tract merely contains direct information; but the second amplifies such information, as we have seen, with many anecdotes; while the third consists wholly of stories. The author is visiting when the conversation turns to conny-catchers and the two books that have appeared about them, whereupon an ex-magistrate volunteers to add to those works several fresh examples. The result is the Thirde Part, consisting of ten excellent stories.

The first is a "pleasant tale how an honest substantiall Citizen was made a Connie, and simply entertained a knave that carried awaie his goods very politickely". One of these rogues accosts a servant, pretending to be her cousin. The next evening he is invited to supper and to remain for the night. During the hours of darkness, he escapes with all the plate and more costly goods, which he sells to a "thief receiver". The master, blaming the maid, imprisons her, and very soon after she dies of grief.

Another interesting story, and one which certainly pleased Greene's readers, tells of a young nip that very cunningly beguiled an ancient professor of the trade. The young rogue purloins a purse, which is filled with

white counters. Then he espies the experienced thief and his "trug". The ancient rogue, having also stolen a purse, mistakenly gives it to the young nip, who plucks the "queane" by the cloak, handing her the first purse, filled with the counters. The young thief leaves with his thirty-seven shillings, received so easily.

But the best story in the tract is the final one which relates how a broker was cunningly overreached by as crafty a knave as himself. The tailor's satin and lace are stolen by two crafty knaves. The one is measured for clothes while his mate removes the purse from the tailor's pocket, cutting off a ring which is later used as a token, when requesting the materials at the tailor's home. The deceit being discovered, a thorough search of all receivers of ill-gotten goods is made, to no avail. But the inventor of the villainy, angry at the small amount received for his labors, visits the tailor the next day, disclosing the name of the broker who received the goods. The constable is sent for, and the broker is apprehended; the conie-catcher is paid for his work in the case, and his revenge is complete.

As an impudent rejoinder for his work of exposure of the conie-catchers in his pamphlets, on April 21, 1592, there was entered in the Stationers' Register The Defence of Conny Catching, or A confutation of Those two injurious Pamphlets published by R. G. against the practitioners of many nimble-witted and mysticall Sciences. By Cuthbert Cunny-Catcher. The author pretends to be a "Licentiate in Whittington Colledge", and promises to tell what he has learned about that place and in his subsequent travels about England. He claims to be very angry that Greene should have omitted entirely the many grosser evils which abound in London, and he is going to undertake the task

with which he thinks Greene should have been occupied.

The pamphlet claims to be a plea for the disreputable thief, and contends that worse cozenage was to be found among the respectable classes. It claims to be a counterblast to Greene's preceding pamphlets: A Notable Discovery and the later parts of Conny-Catching. But those tracts are rather commended by their self-constituted antagonist, and our author is addressed with a respectful suavity, quite out of keeping with the sixteenth century spirit of controversy, but quite in keeping with Greene's methods of self-advertisement.<sup>6</sup>

The argument merely serves as a pretext for exposing the dishonesty of usurers, millers, butchers, lawyers, and tailors, and, still more, as an excuse for presenting the public with some admirable tales. Of real exposition, however, there is very little in the book. Cuthbert Cunny-catcher seems to have been uninterested in his subject itself, or else to have had little direct information to convey. The bulk of the material is comprised in six stories, clever in themselves, and not different from those of the three parts of conny-catching.

One of the anecdotes, the tale of Will Somers, is an adaptation of the story of the division of a nut among the disputants for it, relating how the fool as arbitrator divides the nut shell between two lawyers, and bestows the kernel upon a friend of his, the "Yoeman of the Pantry". Another is a tale of a usurer and of how the wife of his victim secures her revenge. Another relates the discovery of a miller's trickery by a boy. The fourth concerns a false tailor whose deceit is revealed by pretended necromancy. The last

---

<sup>6</sup>Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, p. 365.

two deal with marriage, one showing how a pauper's son under disguise manages to marry a rich man's daughter; the other being the story of a man in England who has sixteen wives, and of the means by which he meets his punishment at the hands of two of them.

The Defence of Conny-Catching is ostensibly an attack upon Greene. But authorities differ as to the authorship of the tract. Dr. Grosart, although including this pamphlet in his collection of Greene's works, does not believe Greene to be the author of it. But since Cuthbert is not a particularly valiant defender of his fraternity of conny-catchers, and since the attack on Greene is not venomous, the ardor displayed being assumed, Jordan believes that Greene's own name should be linked with the pamphlet.<sup>7</sup> Routh, likewise, holds this same belief, mainly because of the lack of venom in the attack.<sup>8</sup>

But the success of this whole expose of low life leads Greene to widen his scope, and to include the practices of female criminals. This new material affords an opening for novelty of form. The author, reviving the medieval dialogue, presents the public with A Disputation betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher in which "Lawrence a Foist and faire Nan a Traffique" have a discussion as to "whether a Whore or a Theefe is most prejuditiall".

Greene divides his work into two parts of about equal length. The first part from which the pamphlet derives its name, consists essentially of the

---

<sup>7</sup>Jordan, John Clark, Robert Greene, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup>Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, p. 365.

dialogue between the thief and the courtesan, who happen to meet, and who, after they have conversed a few minutes on the street, go to a tavern and order supper. While the meal is being prepared they debate their respective abilities at cozenage, telling tales in support of their claims. Lawrence confesses himself worsted by Nan, since greater villanies appear in women than in men; consequently she wins the wager and receives the supper.

Though a burlesque debate, this tract penetrates deeply into the sociology of crime by considering the questions of sex and character which underlie the superficial dexterity of conny-catching.

The second part of the pamphlet is of less social significance than the first. It is concerned with the story of an English courtesan who is converted from her life of sin to one of virtue. The reformation is brought about by a young man who speaks to her of God. He takes her from the "trugging house", provides her with another lodging, and later makes her his wife. Within this story, there is a second story of similar nature, "A pleasant discourse how a wife wanton by her husbands gentle warning, became to be a modest Matron". This latter, Jordan tells us is taken from Gascoigne's Adventures of Master F. J. (1573).<sup>9</sup> It is the story of how a man won back his faithless wife from his friend by paying her as a courtesan, and by his kindly manner.

As Greene had done previously, in this pamphlet too, he added an unrelated tale concerning a new found Conny-catcher, that was "conny-catcht himself".

---

<sup>9</sup> Jordan, John Clark, op. cit., p. 120.

In the two respects, one in the recognition of an important sociological factor in crime—the power of sex, the other in the expression of a true emotion—the emotion which the account of the courtesan's conversion arouses is real—the Disputation is worthy to be separated from the larger and less profound group of Greene's social pamphlets.<sup>10</sup>

In the Disputation, Greene promised to publish soon the Blacke Book, but his illness prevented his preparing the greater work, which from his allusion to it was to have contained a full list of the vices, and the names of all the wrongdoers in London. The Blacke Bookes Messenger, the last of the conny-catching tracts, was licensed August 21, 1592, and was sent "as a Fayring" or a substitute for the Blacke Book itself.

In this work Greene lays open "the Life and Death of Ned Browne one of the most notable Cut-purses, Crosbiters, and Conny-catchers, that ever lived in England", achieving what of all his writings most nearly approaches picaresque fiction. The pamphlet is written in the first person, and represents Ned Browne "standing in a great bay windowe with a halter about his necke, ready to be hanged".

Although Ned appears ready to confess, the author interrupts by giving us a table "of the words of Art lately devised by Ned Browne and his associates, to Crosbite the old Phrases used in the manner of Conny-catching."

Immediately following this table we have the beginning of Ned's story. We are given an account of the rogue's whole life, prefixed by the remark that since he has lived lewdly he will end his life as resolutely. In childhood,

---

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p. 121.



he tells us, his knaveries began by his disobedience and filching, although his parents were honest. At eighteen he committed all sins with greediness. Then a happy thought evidently comes to the rogue, and he gives us one of his experiences in a "Pleasant Tale how Ned Browne crossbit a Maltman". This is immediately followed by four other stories relating how Ned outwitted a priest, kissed a gentlewoman and cut her purse, and let fall a key, thereby robbing a nobleman; and lastly he tells how his wife was once "cross-bitten" in her own art. Between these five tales he mentions various of his exploits. Having finished his autobiography, the rogue commits his spirit to the Lord, leaps from the window, and dies.

But the part that surprises us is that Ned Browne, evidently forgetting all about his determination to die as he has lived, preaches a most orthodox sermon to the crowd before he leaps from the window, warning them to refrain from fighting, vice, thievery, and idleness; and advising them to take counsel of friends, to speak the truth, to despise not God's ministers and magistrates, and to love their country, in order to receive God's blessings.

To further emphasize the moral, Greene finishes the work, by describing the company of wolves who came at night tearing the corpse of Ned from the grave devouring it "as not worthy of burial". The moralizing seems a rather unnecessary adjunct to tales told with such zest and evident pleasure. But Greene had started his conny-catching series as an exposé of vices; regardless of how much his material interested the Elizabethan audience, the people wished to have an excuse for reading this extravagant type of literature.

Jordan considers that the conny-catching pamphlets were written as a journalistic venture purely, and not because Greene had definite information

to convey in regard to the dangerous practices of the metropolis.<sup>11</sup> The inspiration of conny-catching and the material come from a little pamphlet published in England a good many years before. This pamphlet the Manifest Detection of Dice Play (1552) gave Greene all his material about cheating at cards which he used in the first of his conny-catching pamphlets.<sup>12</sup> In his "Epistle to the Reader", Greene copies verbatim two pages from the earlier pamphlet, the passage in which the modus operandi of the Barnard's Law is explained; and further this old Barnard's Law constitutes without change, except in minor details, Greene's art of conny-catching in the Notable Discovery, and forms the basis of the long and pleasant tale of the connie-catchers in the Second Part. From this point on, we have noted that Greene no longer exposes vices, but tells tales of increasing rascality in which we look in vain for sociological interest but read avidly as examples of Elizabethan narrative art.

The stories are allied to the stories of the jest-books so common before and after the time of Greene.<sup>13</sup> This relation is especially true in connection with the emphasis upon the trick, the performance of a clever deed. We are not presented to people in whom we are interested for their own sakes, but at the same time our attention is not centered wholly upon the event. The reason for this is the using of rogues as anti-heroes. So that we do not have from Greene a mere collection of jests, but genuine fictitious narrative of such merit as to mark a step in the employment of the anti-heroic as a subject

<sup>11</sup>Jordan, John Clark, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>13</sup>Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, The Literature of Roguery, Vol. I, p. 59.

for artistic treatment.<sup>14</sup>

But although Greene gives literary form to his work, it cannot be called picaresque romance, since the tales, for the most part, are complete in themselves, and there evidently was no desire in Greene's mind to paint a roguish person. The tales, then, are individual units, embedded in a framework, either expository like the first two parts of conny-catching, and the Defence, or fictitious autobiography like that of Ned Browne. Or the tales may have no framework at all, like those of the Thirde Part.

Most of the tales in the conny-catching series, of which there are approximately thirty-five, are amusing and clever. They are unified in idea and treatment, for they tell of a single incident. In style they are simple, for Greene conceived the proper language in which to write of such base subjects to be itself "base" and devoid of refinement.

Greene is at his best when he is concerned with the development of events, and when he is not encumbered with the task of presenting character. In the illustrative tales of the conny-catching pamphlets all the conditions for success for a man like Greene are inherent in the nature of the material. A rogue is pretty much a rogue anywhere. Greene is, therefore, only faced with the task of following his own plan in presenting action and situation, rather than character.

His success in this phase of social literature led to the exploiting of the genre by rival authors. Samuel Rowlands in Greenes Ghost Haunting Connie-Catchers (1602) pretended to edit what is really a theft from previous coney-

---

<sup>14</sup> Jordan, John Clark, op. cit., p. 110.

catching pamphlets, those of Greene especially.<sup>15</sup> Among his fifteen stories appear the tricks of colliers, as detailed in the Blacke Bookes Messenger; the trick of reclaiming others' property at inns and fairs, from the Ground worke of Conny-catching; the story of a false cry of justice from the Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher; the fraud of blindfolding a victim in Paul's as if by mistake, from the Thirde Part of Conny-catching; and an abridgement of the bigamist story, from the Defence of Conny-catching. Tricks as old as the securing of a loan on a chest filled with stones, harking back to the Cid are in evidence.

The Belman of London (1608) by Thomas Dekker was one of the most popular of the conny-catching books. It went through four editions the first year, but Dekker's book is a tissue of borrowings from earlier pamphlets—not even clothed in new language, but copied word for word—woven together and ornamented with liberal additions of his swashing rhetoric and extravagant humor.<sup>16</sup> There is no more entertaining pamphlet to be found, for Dekker had a wonderful knack acquired by long practice in hack work, of weaving together small parings of other men's wit into an effective whole.<sup>17</sup>

The title suggests a picture of city life, but the scene opens in the country, providing a discourse of all the idle vagabonds of England, their conditions, their laws amongst themselves, their decrees and orders, their meetings, and their manners of living. Dekker comes upon an inn here in the country where the vagabonds are about to attend their quarterly feast.

<sup>15</sup> Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Literature of Roguery, Vol. I, pp. 103-104.

<sup>16</sup> Aydelotte, Frank, "Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds", Oxford Historical and Literary Studies, Vol. I, p. 130.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

After the feast the old wrinkled beldam who has hid him explains the orders and their various tricks and sleights, which explanation is taken directly from Harman's Caveat. When the rout has broken up, Dekker returns to London, where he meets the Belman who discloses to him knowledge of city tricks, all of which is borrowed.

Greene's Discovery of Coosnage furnishes Barnard's Law. Figging Law, Courbing Law, Vincents' Law, Prigging Law and the Blacke Art are all taken from the Second Part of Conny-catching. He borrows three stories from the Thirde and Last Part of Conny-catching; and of the five tricks which he calls "Five Jumps at Leap Frog", Greene's Thirde and Last Part of Conny-catching provides two, and Rowlands' Greenes Ghost Haunting Conie-catchers, three. The conclusion of the Belman offers a "short discourse of canting" which turns out to be the very dialogue between an Upright Man and a Rogue given by Harman in the Caveat. Thus, we see plagiarism from several sources, prefaced by an original and interesting narrative. If Dekker shows little originality of matter, his treatment justifies his thefts, and he deserves especial notice as the first after Greene to unify in a fiction separate accounts of rogues.<sup>18</sup>

Not much is known about Dekker's life and character, but from his rogue pamphlets one or two things are clear.<sup>19</sup> He was a typical hackwriter, following the fashion, writing what would sell, unscrupulous in borrowing other men's work, but brilliant in patching it together and dressing it out in showy rhetoric.

The social conditions of the time brought about the vogue and interest

<sup>18</sup>Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Literature of Roguery, Vol. I, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup>Aydelotte, Frank, op. cit., p. 133.

in this class of literature dealing with crime in London due to vagabondage; and we, therefore, see that in the seventeenth century when these conditions had been improved by legal administration, and still more by economic adjustment, rogue literature no longer required the theft from previous English authors, but fell back upon tradition and imitation, sometimes of much earlier English works, sometimes of foreign.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LITERATURE OF THE NEWLY-RISING BOURGEOIS CLASS; THE CHANGING SOCIAL TRENDS GIVING RISE TO THIS CLASS; THE SOCIAL MATERIALS OF GREENE, NASHE, DELONEY, DEKKER AND MASSINGER

In the last decade of the sixteenth century came the assertion of the bourgeois element. As an embodiment of realistic tendencies, it followed upon the previous romancing; but social conditions had also made it inevitable. In the Renaissance, for the first time, books were useful to the rank and file of commoners, and as the literacy of the Englishmen increased, ever more numerous became the books and pamphlets prepared for the intelligence of the "mean sort of men".<sup>1</sup>

The most obvious result of the spread of education among the middle classes was the growth of the reading public. From the mid-sixteenth century onward, the number of average citizens who were buying and reading books was steadily increasing, and even before that time a large portion of the output of the printing presses had been designed for ordinary readers. There had come an unconscious development in the public taste, an increase in the appetite for printed works, a fixed habit of book-buying among citizens whose fathers, if they read at all, had been content with the Bible and an almanac.<sup>2</sup>

The growth of the capital was responsible for the social progress, in part. London had always occupied a unique position in the affairs of the nation. It was by far the most important seaport in the kingdom, and it had

<sup>1</sup>Wright, Louis B., Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

been a great commercial center from very early times. Its commerce was developing and extending; its merchants and merchant companies were sending their ships to all parts of the known world. Then, too, since the collapse of feudalism, London had become the center of political power in England.

The London citizen was growing to be a very important person, proud of his position, and ranking in society next to the nobility and gentry. Indeed, we are told, he was continually rising to the rank of gentleman, and many young gentlemen by birth were being apprenticed yearly to important citizens.<sup>3</sup>

The initiation of all this progress occurred subsequent to the fall of Antwerp (1576) when London had also established itself as the capital of European commerce, to which all nationalities crowded in search of wealth. Thus, the rich men of the upper, as well as the middle, class were being gathered into one city where, for want of better investments, their wealth was converted into gold plate, jewelry and rich apparel, till London became the city of fantastic costumes and extravagant ostentation.<sup>4</sup>

The linen trade was as yet of small value, and that of silk-weaving was only just introduced.<sup>5</sup> But the woollen manufacture was fast becoming an important element in the national wealth. England no longer sent her fleeces to be woven in Flanders and to be dyed at Florence. The spinning of yarn, the weaving, fulling, and dyeing of cloth, was spreading rapidly from the towns over the country side.

---

<sup>3</sup>Tickner, F. W., A Social and Industrial History of England, p. 280.

<sup>4</sup>Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, p. 362.

<sup>5</sup>Green, John Richard, A Short History of the English People, Vol. I, p.500.



The disuse of salt-fish and the greater consumption of meat marked the improvement which was taking place among the country folk. Their rough and wattled farmhouses were being superseded by dwellings of brick and stone. Pewter was replacing the wooden trenchers of the earlier yeomanry; there were yeomen who could boast of a fair show of silver-plate; and it is from this period that we can first date the rise of a conception which seems to us now a peculiarly English one, the conception of domestic comfort. The lofty houses of the wealthier merchants, their parapeted fronts and costly wainscoting, their cumbrous but elaborate beds, their carved staircases, not only contrasted with the squalor which had till then characterized English towns, but marked the rise of a new middle class which was to make its way into literature for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

To the popular mind, collections of jests, as we have seen, had become an acceptable form of literature, while, at the same time, material was being collected for English rogue studies; and while the jest-collections had aimed at mere amusement, the rogue pamphlets were prompted by ideas of reform. It is this material which anticipates the realistic work of Greene, Nashe and Deloney, who labored to present the dark and the fair side of the life of the people. They wrote to reform as well as to amuse this important rising class.

The three differ somewhat in the methods they adopt. Greene relates his own life story a grim narrative which reveals, incidentally, much of the seamier side of life; Nashe, on the other hand, while less gloomy is more satirical in what he has to say; while Deloney has neither the grim realism of the

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 503.

one nor the forceful satire of the other.<sup>7</sup> He is content to depict citizen life with a proper regard for the dignity of the crafts, and with a sense of humor.

The greatest professional success with the anatomy of misspent life was made by Robert Greene, who discovered a rich vein of human interest in the revelation of his alleged iniquities, described in a series of repentance pamphlets so filled with moralization that no burgher could resist them. Being a clever journalist, Greene also inserted enough miscellaneous anecdotes and illustrative tales to keep the entertainment value of his pamphlets high.

Robert Greene is called the second great romancer of the Elizabethan period, in which he appears as a picturesque but pathetic Bohemian, with "wit lent from Heaven but vices sent from Hell".<sup>8</sup> Before he had finished with Cambridge, his moral nature was tainted, and after that his way lay over troubled roads. In 1586, a glimpse of happier things seemed promised, but, once again, his evil genius led him astray, until finally he was rescued by a poor shoemaker in 1592, under whose mean roof he made a sorrowful end. His life had been one of struggle and drift, a wayward course of frustrated good intentions; and these things left their impress upon what he wrote and upon his mode of writing.

In the first place, he wrote merely to sell, and as a consequence, he resembles a sensitive barometer indicating the literary vogue from day to day.<sup>9</sup> When Lyly was popular, Greene adopted his methods; when romance was called for, he also complied; his attempt at the pastoral followed Sidney's success;

<sup>7</sup> Atkins, J. W. H., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 409.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

while his realistic pamphlets responded to a yet later demand. And yet, tho in life he followed the worse, he approved the better; his work is free from licentiousness; he never "gave the looser cause to laugh".

Although Greene is one of the few English men of standing in letters who furthered the development of the literature of ~~rogue~~ <sup>rogue</sup>ry prior to the eighteenth century, he had won fame in fiction only as a love-romancer in the tradition of Lyly until within two years of his death. The change came in 1590, when he began to show signs of contrition for the wild life he had led; and this frame of mind continuing until his death in September, 1592, he filled the interval by composing a numerous series of picaresque writings.

The first of these repentant tracts, the Mourning Garment (1590) shows Greene in a contrite mood. He speaks of himself as resembling Nineveh suddenly awakened to consciousness of sin by Jonah. He does not, as yet, deal directly with London life, though his own experiences lightly veiled, form the nucleus of the tales. The pamphlet is an adaptation of the story of the Prodigal Son, with the addition of pastoral details as reminders of his earlier craft.

In the complete title of the work, the author speaks of the Mourning Garment: Given Him by Repentance at the Funerals of Love; which he presents for a favor to all young Gentlemen, that wish to weave Themselves from wanton desires. The scene is laid in the city of Gallipolis and pictures to us Rabbi Bilessi, the chief burgomaster of the city, in whom all virtues have taken root. The Rabbi has two sons; Sophonos, the elder, remains at home with the father, but Philador, the younger boy, who, contrary to the disposition of the brother, frequents company agreeable to his years and thoughts, goes

forth to see the world.

Before he leaves, in his plea to the father, Philador says that he wishes to become acquainted with the customs of other countries, thereby having his wit augmented by experience. But in true middle-class fashion, Rabbi Bilessi warns his son against the perils in foreign countries, advising him to get wisdom in his own country. Since the son will not be dissuaded, the father brings forth coin and treasure, delivering it to his younger son as his portion, counseling him thus:<sup>10</sup>

Packer thee forth with as many virtues as thou canst  
beare, thou shalt disburthen them all, and return home  
with as many vices as you can bring.

To emphasize the moral quality of the work, Rabbi Bilessi's final prayer is that the son will follow the eleven precepts which the father has bought with many years and great experience. Serving God is of prime importance, but, also, it is necessary to exercise wisdom in foreseeing the end in all things, in being discreet and hiding "all thoughts in the heart's bottom", in hearing all you can while having little talk, in feigning want rather than boasting of money, and in not being too prodigal nor too covetous. Three things to take heed of are wine, dice, and women.

But despite these warnings and the caution of the shepherds whom he meets on his journey in a beautiful idyllic setting, Philador is despoiled by three women with whom he takes lodging. Too late, does he reflect on the advice of his father, when, after starving for several days, he eats husks with the swine whom he tends.

---

<sup>10</sup> Grosart, Alexander B., (editor), The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, 15 vols., Vol. IX, p. 128.

Finally he returns home in a spirit of submission to his father, speaking of his undoing by women, through flattery, deceit, and inconstancy. The father overcome with joy prepares a feast for his prodigal boy, which is attended by shepherds, one of whom sings a song paralleling Philador's mistakes. A note by the author provides the conclusion of the tract. He promises us that "as this is the first" of his "reformed passions", so is it the last of his "trifling Pamphlets".

The work is an odd mixture of the pastoral with the picaresque, poetry with prose. The shepherd's voice is heard through the whole work and his life is pictured as the ideal existence. Inconstancy of love is the keynote of the production, and very early in the pamphlet, we have the story centering about Rosamond, the shepherdess, and her treatment by Alexis, whose love was transferred to Phillida, ultimately causing Rosamond's death and Alexis' suicide. The infidelity of women is emphasized thoroughly in Philador's treatment at the hands of the three sirens who despoil him of his goods and money and then banish him in poverty from their home. Artificiality is strangely interwoven with the real in Philador's meeting with the forsaken lover to whom he presents a scroll, wherein a variety of animals are compared to women as regards deceit, inconstancy, and dissimulation. Then, on the hero's return home, we face reality once more with the penitence of the Prodigal, the jealousy of the eldest son, and the happiness of Rabbi Bilessi.

The Mourning Garment is the only "novel" which follows the prodigal story through out its length in all details. But other works of Greene follow it in certain parts, and certainly are to be classed as belonging to the Prodigal son literature of the time. One of Greene's variations is that to be found

in Never Too Late and its sequel, Francescos Fortunes, the two novels together making a form of the prodigal story.

Greene's Never Too Late (1590) comes closer to the literature of roguery. Francesco, an Italian adventurer, relates his wanderings, his marriage, his desertion of his wife for a courtesan who robs him, his life with actors and as a dramatic poet, and, finally, his reconciliation with his wife. Except for this last incident, most of the account seems autobiographic, and it parallels the later Groatsworth of Wit.

We are presented to a Gentleman, a resident of Bergamo, not far from Venice, who meets a traveler, a Palmer, who has traveled through countries to make men "beware by his harmes". This topic leads the host to ask a description of the countries through which the Palmer has travelled and to receive an indictment of the people of the continent. All of this introduction simply serves as a background for the tale which the Palmer relates.

This tale is lengthy and centers about Francesco, a gentleman of an ancient English house, whose learning is better than his revenues. In love with Isabel, whose father treats her cruelly, since he intends that she shall marry a rich man and not Francesco, the hero suffers many vicissitudes of fortune before he finally wins her as his wife. But after seven years Francesco's business takes him to Troynouant where he meets Infida, the courtesan, who entraps him and causes his remaining away from Isabella for a term of three years. Here the Palmer abruptly stops his story, with the promise that he shall complete it on the "morrow at rising".

The sequel Francescos Fortunes: or, The second part of Greene's Never Too Late (1590) relates the "fall of love, the bitter fruites of Follies

pleasure, and the repentant sorrows of a reformed man".<sup>11</sup> The Palmer continues his tale by narrating the further misfortunes of Francesco who must seek work as he has been despoiled of all his riches. He chances to meet with players who persuade him to write "Comedies, Tragedies, Pastorals".

This topic serves as an introduction to a discussion of plays. The Palmer discourses at length on the ancient Greek and Roman plays, finally arriving at the conclusion that drama is praiseworthy if the plays are of a satirical type, criticizing the vanities of the day.

Then, to return to the thread of the story, the narrator describes Infidas' later actions to reclaim Francesco who has by this time learned his lesson. But meanwhile, we are told, Isabel is beset by temptations and persecutions because she will not consent to do the bidding of Bernardo, Burgomaster of the city. Unwittingly, a stranger relates this whole story of Isabel's persecution, unjust imprisonment, and fortitude to Francesco, her husband, who, after penning a sonnet, the theme of which is: "I find no time too late for to amend", prepares for his journey homeward.

To provide a means of inserting his twelve precepts of "wit bought with experience"—similar to those given in the Mourning Garment—the author provides Francesco with a banquet at which he is presented this gift of counsel.

On his return home, we are told, the hero is treated with respect and is tendered another reception at which the host tells a story, concerning Mirimida, a shepherdess, who, scorning all types of lovers, is content to live her life alone tending her father's sheep.

---

<sup>11</sup> Grosart, Alexander, B., (editor), op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 111.

With the conclusion to Francesco's adventures in the statement that ever after he lived happily, with Isabel, we return once more to the narrator of the anecdote, the Palmer, who now tells us that he has come to Venice in penance for "follies of his youth's passions" when he lived in love, reaping all losses by "love". That he may draw others from harm he wishes to "quip at follies" showing the miseries Venus mixes with momentary contents. The Palmer sets towards Venice, with the final caution to be guided by Francesco's fall and its evil consequences.

In Greene's second repentance tract and its sequel, we observe that the author's career is more closely followed. Here it is Francesco who impersonates Greene, living through the misfortunes of the author's life, and also tasting of forgiveness at the hands of Isabella, which Greene, however, did not have the happiness to receive from his wife.

In the method of workmanship, we note a slighter attachment to his pastoral tendencies than we observed in his first repentance tract; artificiality, while not having the prominent position it holds in the Mourning Garment, is still evident in the use of sonnets for little or no reason, in the employment of passionate letters among the various characters in the tract, and also in the interspersed dialogues and discourses in the pamphlet.

In 1592, further autobiographical work is penned by Greene on his death bed, when the veil concealing the author's identity is deliberately lifted. The events of his life are again dealt with, and, in the Groatsworth of Wit bought with A Million of Repentance, the writer is careful to state that Roberto is himself.



In this tract we are presented to the usurer Gorinius, who, on his death bed, divides his property between his two sons, bequeathing all his ill-gathered goods to Lucanio, the elder, and reserving for Roberto, an old groat wherewith to purchase wit. Not being satisfied, the younger son introduces his brother to Lamilia, a courtesan, who causes Lucanio to consume in two years his vast wealth and to become a notorious "pandar" in which course he remains until his death. Roberto, having thought to receive a share of the spoils from Lamilia, is betrayed by her instead and disowned by Lucanio. While bemoaning his fate he is overheard by a gentleman who promises to help. Roberto falls from one vice to another in his new life as a player. Finally, in dire poverty, and without friends, Roberto, too late, considers his father's legacy and advice.

Here Greene breaks off his story of Roberto, writing the remainder of the pamphlet in his own person. Once again he presents the reader with a set of ten rules by which he may guide his actions. Lastly, he directs wholesome advice to his "fellowe Schollers who have lived loosely too". He bids farewell with a Fable of Aesop concerning the ant and the grasshopper, in which he compares himself to the shiftless grasshopper.

Besides the autobiographic features of the pamphlet, we are presented with a reference to Shakespeare in which Greene compares him to

an upstart Crow beautified with our feathers, that with his "Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide" supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute "Johannes fac totum" is in his own conceit the only Skake-scene in a countrie.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Grosart, Alexander B., op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 144.

The last pamphlet of this type is entitled The Repentance of Robert Greene Maister of Artes. His life's story is prefixed by a discussion of his return to God in his last illness. Beginning with his early life in Norwich, his birthplace, the author emphasizes his disobedience as a child, his lewd companions at the University of Cambridge, the villanies practiced by him in Italy and Spain, and his wasted time as an author of plays and love pamphlets. His vices are described in a most straightforward way, Greene hoping by this expose and repentance to dissuade others living a life of sin. His fondness for rules and precepts is again illustrated in "certaine Caviats" sent to a friend "as a farewell". The letter to his wife, requesting that she pay his last friend for services rendered during his final illness, closes the pamphlet and also concludes Greene's tracts dealing with his life and repentance.

In this last death-bed pamphlet, the penitence of the author is very direct. The style seems inferior to that of the earlier tracts, no illustrative anecdotes being inserted to offset the sombre coloring of the repentance.

In a resume of his autobiographic tracts, we find that the only radical departure in these prodigal stories of Greene to which no parallel exists elsewhere in contemporary fiction is that of the substitution of the writing of plays for the feeding of swine as the prodigal's lot while he is in the far country.<sup>13</sup> This element may be autobiographical; at least it may have been suggested by Greene's experience. All this work of Greene had meant a considerable contribution to the literature dealing with contemporary life. We become acquainted with the vices and the villains of the day, and their type

---

<sup>13</sup>Jordan, John Clark, Robert Greene, p. 67.

of existence is laid bare. His real service is to have penned some graphic scenes from a side of life that he knew only in part from immediate observation, and to have initiated a kind of story-telling, which through the rogue stories and criminal biographies, led to epoch making developments in the hands of Defoe.<sup>14</sup> For middle-class readers, Greene performed a worthy service, by providing them with reading matter which amused, while not "smelling too strongly of damnation".

Besides dealing with the roguery of the capital in his conny-catching tracts and exploiting the Bohemian life of London in his repentances, Greene also gives some attention to the more respectable side of London life, in his Quippe for an Upstart Courtier or a Quaint Dispute between Velvet-Breeches and Cloth Breeches (1592). In it Greene does not deal with one class only, but with some sixty professions and trades, from the knight down to the lowest and humblest workman, all of which are passed in review, commented upon and branded as good or bad.

The story opens by our being presented to the author in the fields. Here he falls into a dream wherein he wanders into a vale all covered with flowers. Suddenly as he travels up the hill he sees an "uncouth headless thing" come down the hill; this he soon recognizes as a pair of Velvet breeches, "sumptuous to the eye, pompous in their gestures". Another pair of breeches, plain cloth ones, appears from the opposite direction. These two represent pride and lowliness, respectively. Velvet-breeches greets Cloth with scorn since Velvet-breeches, born in Italy, honors England by his presence. But Cloth-breeches

<sup>14</sup>Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. II, p. 144.

says he belongs to the old ancient yeomanry and gentility, and that he should be counted supreme since Velvet-breeches brought abuses to England of "self-love, sodomie, and vainglory".

Greene interrupts their discussion with the suggestion that they debate the question. The author is to act as judge, and a jury is proposed, the selection of which forms the important part of the pamphlet. Finally the twenty-four men are chosen with the knight at their head. The jury debates briefly and renders its decision that Cloth-breeches is the older and rightful possessor of the land.

Greene got the plan and many details, sometimes verbal borrowings and paraphrases, from a poem written a number of years before.<sup>15</sup> This is called The Debate between Pride and Lowliness by one F. T. But Greene's pamphlet is much better than the poem on which it is based.<sup>16</sup> Instead of the eighty pages of stiff unreadable quatrains with their awkward versification and lack of emphasis, Greene gives us sprightly prose. The author makes a conscious effort to counteract a fundamental difficulty. Greene brings before us the sixty orders, but his method is one which has interest in itself. He manages to shift our attention from the monotony of counting off tradesmen to the more human and interesting task of wanting to "hurry up" the process of selection so that we may hear the verdict soon.

The idea of the jury of tradesmen enables Greene to pass in review representatives of differing trades and pursuits. This brings together a body of

---

<sup>15</sup>Jordan, John Clark, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

typical citizens, and is thus a device which enables the author to introduce his projected class-descriptions. The work reveals Greene's sympathies towards the tradesmen, for he not only seems happy in their company, but he also takes care to follow the advice of Cloth-breeches while scorning the objections and requests of Velvet-breeches.

The value of the pamphlet consists in new life and meaning put into old forms of thought; tradesmen had been victims of caricature since the early Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> In turning from the rogues of London in his conny-catching work, and from the vices of the capital in his repentances, Greene was broadening his view of society. He was dealing not with the problems of his own day, but rather with the conflict between haughtiness on the one hand which leads to tyranny, and lowliness on the other which leads to the development of democratic ideals; and the pamphlet's real significance lies in the firmness of its grasp upon the understanding of these social values. In this work, we may say, with assurance, that Greene reached his summit in social literature, it being his only pamphlet that looks upon this middle-class society with sympathy and affection.

Like his friend Greene, Nashe was responsible for certain pamphlets dealing with the social life of London; but he does not confine himself as Greene, to the outcast, nor, on the other hand, does he find much attraction in the steady going citizen. His attack is directed against respectable roguery, against foolish affectation and empty superstition, and these things prove excellent whetstones for his satirical wit.<sup>18</sup> Both Nashe and Greene died in

<sup>17</sup>Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, p. 366.

<sup>18</sup>Atkins, J. W. H., "Elizabethan Prose Fiction", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 412.

the early thirties, and in other respects they are not dissimilar. Nobody can be described as one of the university wits with more appropriateness. Wit was Nashe's aim in writing, such erudition as he loved to display, miscellaneous rather than genuine, being subsidiary to that accomplishment--wit not so much in the modern sense as in that of general intellectual alertness and sprightly address.<sup>19</sup>

The first example of the ebullience of wit is found in the Anatomie of Absurditie (1589) which is a characteristic study of contemporary manners. The title itself is rather interesting. Grosart, in his study of Nashe, considers that the author fetched the title from Greene's Anatomie of Flatterie (1583) or from his Arbusto or Anatomie of Fortune (1584) rather than from the Anatomie of Abuses (1584) by Stubbes, a grim Puritan whom he detested.<sup>20</sup> The aim of the author is expressed on his title page where he speaks of the work as "Contayning a breefe confutation of the slender imputed praises to feminine perfection, with a short description of the severall practices of youth, and sundry follies of our licentious times".

Thomas Nashe plays with the theme of Stubbe's Anatomie of Abuses, but while he does not deny that much evil is abroad, he still contrives to find much that is amusing in the "licentious follies" assailed by the Puritan. The Anatomie of Absurditie is a rambling series of animadversions on women, Puritans, astrologers, ballad-mongers, ill-educated preachers, gluttons in eating and drinking, ornate writers, sceptics, and proclaimers of newfangledness in

<sup>19</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 153.

<sup>20</sup>Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols., Vol. I, p. xlvii.

any form; followed by a eulogy of poetry and learning and observations on the best methods of acquiring knowledge.

The satire is colored by touches of euphuism and confused by innumerable digressions. Like the Schole-house of Women, we have an arraignment of feminine character, at the hands of the ancient Latin and Greek authors, Aristotle, Diogenes, Democritus, Plutarch, Seneca and Plautus. Nashe in vivid words adds his accusation:<sup>21</sup>

How many hayres they have on their heads, so many  
snares they will find for a neede to snarle men in,  
how many voices all of them have, so many vices  
each of them hath, how many tongues, so many tales,  
how many eyes, so many allurements.

Puritans likened to pharisees receive the next onslaught, to be closely followed by astrologers who challenge knowledge "unto themselves of deeper mysteries", and ballad-mongers "who come to speake before they come to know". This latter leads to a defence of true poetry by Nashe, and a dissertation on learning and knowledge, in which he particularly decries the ignorance of preachers. Certain elements of methods of acquiring wit are censured. We are advised to "think not common things unworthy" of our knowledge, of which we "are ignorant". Particularly are innovators the whetstones for his sharpness. He tells us:<sup>22</sup>

Nothing is so great anemie to a sounde judgment  
as the pride of a peevish conceit, which causeth a  
man both in life and beliefe, either to snatch up  
or hatch new fangles.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, p. 65.

The author has only venom for those who ask unnecessary questions, e. g., "Homer's country, parentage, and sepulcher". They have "left unto us not thinges found, but things to be sought". He warns them to refrain from such folly and "not seeke that which is not/<sup>to</sup>be found least they find not that which is to be found".

The fopperies of romance which were particularly detested by Nashe receive all the sharp-witted satire of which the author is master. In sending those writers to the vicar of the Ship of Fools he hurls these words after them:<sup>23</sup>

The very same are they that obtrude themselves unto us, as the Authors of eloquence, and fountains of our finer phrases, when as they sette before us, nought but a confused mass of words without matter, a Chaos of sentences without any profitable sence, resembling drummes, which beeing emptie within, found big without. Were it that any Morrall of greater moment, might be fished out of their fabulous follie, leaving theyr words, we would cleave to their meaning,....but when as lust is the tractate of so many leaves, and love passions the lavish dispense of so much paper I must needes sende such idle wits to shrift to the vicar of the S. Fooles, who in steede of a worser may be such a Gothamists ghostly Father.

The qualities of strength, sharp-pointed wit, and love of strong words and flashing phrases and expressions stand forth in this prolix and erratic satire, confused by the countless digressions.

In his next pamphlet Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell (1592) we have a general satire on the inhabitants of London. Since the devil was still an object of ribald curiosity, Nashe associated his satire with that suggestive personality. The author himself figures as Pierce, representing the literary man as overburdened by poverty addressing a complaint to the devil

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, p. 12.



since appeals to the church have been made without success. In a private "Epistle of the Author to the Printer" the author sets forth his full meaning and purpose very clearly:<sup>24</sup>

For, whereas, those that stand most on their honor, have shut up their purses, and shift us off with court-hollie-bread: and on the other side, a number of hypocritical hot-spurres, that have God alwaies in their mouthes, will give nothing for Gods sake; I have clapt up a handsome Supplication to the Divell and sent it by a goodfellow, that I know will deliver it.

The Knight of the Post receives the petition which he reads. The whole document is then rehearsed. Nashe reverts to the conception of the seven deadly sins, presenting all the humors of the ages and his own disillusionments and aspirations under these sins. He entreats the devil to give to him the superfluous wealth of the rich, enforcing the request with a long catalogue of the evils infesting the world.

Avarice, niggardliness and pride receive the force of his censure, but the last is the greatest evil. The pride of the court, of the counterfeit politician, of the prodigal young master, is exposed; but Nashe reserves his strongest language to satirize the learned. Many scholars, not content to participate one faith with all Christendom, invent new sects "to live when they are dead" by having the sects "called after their names"; thereby causing the triumph of atheists. Pride, peculiar to the Spaniard, the Italian, the French, and the Dane is vividly portrayed. While this sin is the special disease of the Spaniard, the Italian in a more cunning way takes pride in humility by proffering a stranger more courtesy than he means to perform;

<sup>24</sup> Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols., Vol. II, p. 3.

whereas the Frenchman is a compact of deceivable courtship and "loves none but himself and his pleasure". Danes, he describes, as "senceless proud dolts", vain of their soldiery. Finally, pride at home is evidenced in artificers, merchants' wives, and peasants "sprung up of nothing".

Envy, the adopted son of pride; murder, ~~the~~ companion of envy; and wrath, a close friend, are duly exposed. Innumerable digressions interrupt the plan of the work. Invectives are hurled against enemies of poetry and against "dunsticall" preachers, followed by the customary defence and eulogy of verse, in which the fruits of poetry are tabulated. Even his own profession of lampoonist is advertised, the author promising that if he be ill-treated he will "rayle soundly not for an houre or a day whiles the injury is fresh", but in some "elaborate pollished Poeme" which he will leave to the world. Before continuing with the last of the capital sins, he finds it necessary also to inveigh against astrologers.

Once more, in the same abrupt manner, he continues with the main theme of the work criticizing especially his own countrymen who are given to gluttony in eating and drinking. The work is enlivened by anecdotes of famous persons who use moderation in all things, and by a dissertation on the eight degrees and types of inebriation. Sloth and "lecherie" are placed last in the list, followed by a discourse on the value of plays and a confutation of the objections against players.

Then having pilloried all the oddities of the age, and having thoroughly released his shafts against innovators and upstarts, he closes his supplications, only to continue with a disquisition on devilry and spiritualism which was at that time one of the important questions of the day. By means of a

conversation between the Knight of the Post and Pierce, in which the ideas of the early Fathers and the ancient philosophers are quoted, Nashe gives us his opinion of the superstitions of the age concerning spirits, witches and devils. With the warning that prayer and faith alone will counteract the power of Satan and his army, we say farewell to the Knight of the Post and to Pierce Penilesse, the author, as well.

Nashe's exuberant fertility of fancy and expression are given full play in this booklet; but in Christ's Teares over Jerusalem (1593) where he has a more solemn duty to perform, the style has lost its gay originality, and in places approximates to pulpit oratory, although still being vigorous.

As we have seen in the case of Greene, the ideals of renescent Italy were a treacherous guide among the temptations of London, but the taste of the reading public must have chiefly weighed with these bread winners. The lower classes loved the spectacle of a stricken conscience, and the ever-increasing sect of puritans must, by now, have formed a body of opinion difficult to resist.<sup>25</sup> Making capital of this tendency, in Christ's Teares over Jerusalem, Nashe throws light upon the morals of Elizabethan London, and depicts the depravity and crimes of its tavern life.

Assuming the person of Christ, Nashe first gives a long paraphrastic account of Christ's prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. This he follows by a terror-striking account of the siege and destruction of the city, because the Jews refused the prophets and continued in their way of error.

Then, turning to his own time and country, the author says:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Routh, Harold V., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 370.

<sup>26</sup>Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols., Vol. IV, p. 120.

Now to London must I turne me, London that turneth from none of thy left-hand impieties. As great a desolation as Jerusalem, hath London deserved. Whatsoever of Jerusalem, I have written, was but to lend her a Looking-glasse. Now enter I into my true Teares, my Teares for London, wherein I crave pardon, though I deale more searchingly then common soule-surgions accustom: for in this Booke, wholly have I bequeathed my penne and my spyrite, to the prostrating and ensorrowing the frontiers of sinne.

Then comes his parallel picture of the demoralization, depravity and crimes of London, which cry out for a like castigation. Pride, after the destruction of Antwerp, came to England, especially London, begetting sons and daughters. The sons are called, Ambition, Avarice, Vaine-glory, Atheisme, Discontent, and Contention. The daughters are named, Disdain, Gorgeous-attire, and Delicacie. Each sin forms a theme of its own, introduced by a definition. But all riot unchecked in London.

With frequent allusions to the Bible, the author anathematizes ambition and avarice, railing and hurling invective against usurers. Atheism causes Nashe to use the most scathing sarcasm in speaking of "dunce" preachers who "hotch-potch" Scripture "without use or edification". Vain-glory, discontent, and contention are likewise subjects to receive warning; and, again, when speaking of contention Nashe exercises his pen against schismatics and heretics.

The daughters of Pride are vices especially practiced by women. Fair women are most subject to disdain, while gorgeous-attire is evidenced in the painted faces of women and in the attire of men who "put all their felicity in going pompously and garishly". Under the last daughter of Pride, the author discusses gluttony, "which if any Country under heaven be culpable of, England is"; lust, with an expose of London stews unparalleled in English literature

and sloth.

All of these vices are anatomized, described fully, and the evil doers are warned by quotations from the Bible. In conclusion the author speaks of the present plague in London, again hurling his shafts of criticism against usurers. In the form of a dramatic monologue, he ends his work by interceding to the Lord for mercy since "wee must appeale from His justice".

This attitude is that of a Tudor churchman; but there are sections in the latter half of the work where we find Nashe at his best, dashing off his word-portraits of men and things, and yet with a strange pathos and concern for the future of London. Nashe's realistic descriptions of the "glorious Elizabethan age" reveal terrible evils and sufferings. A few are representative of innumerable:

Hath no chyld of Pryde so many Disciples as thys tiptoe Ambition. Why cal I him Ambition, when he hath changed his name unto honor?<sup>27</sup>

Let the ambitious man stretch out hys lymbes never so, he taketh up no more ground (being dead) then the Beggar.<sup>28</sup>

Those preachers please best, which can fitte us with a cheape Religion, that preach Fayth, and all Fayth, and no good-workes, but to the houshold of Fayth.<sup>29</sup>

The value of the pamphlet lies in these word pictures of contemporary people and things.

The object of Nashe's ridicule in his next pamphlet Terrors of the Night (1594) is the superstition of the age. Europe was agitated with the belief

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

that the devil was regaining his control over man.<sup>30</sup> His handiwork was being discovered everywhere; old women were witches, cats were spirits or transfigured men, dreams were messages from hell. The report of a gentleman who died after experiencing seven fantastic visions had just reawakened Englishmen's alarm at the unseen perils of sleep and darkness.<sup>31</sup> Nashe seized this opportunity to compose his booklet. In it he amuses himself by discoursing on dreams, devils, and such in a way that proves entertaining.

He opens his tract, with his "tongue in his cheek" by discoursing at length, on the types, essences, descriptions, and faculties of spirits. These he classifies into spirits of fire, water, earth, and air, proclaiming that those of earth and water are predominant in the night.

Then his sympathetic nature places him in a more "common-sense" mood while he explains the effects of melancholy, one of which is the process of dreaming. His definition is worthy of note. He says:<sup>32</sup>

A dream is nothing else but a bubbling scum or fraoth of the fancie, which the day hath left undigested, or an after feast made of fragments of idle imaginations.

With this as his theme, he disposes of the mystery of dreams, by explaining them as after-effects of the day's activity. Dreams are fearful to those only whose consciences expect private mischief.

Astrologers are exposed, and their practices Nashe describes from his own experience. The "Artes of phisiognomie and palmestrie" are also ridiculed under this same type of deceit.

---

<sup>30</sup>Routh, Harold V., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 372.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>32</sup>Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols., Vol. III, p. 225.

Since the author comes to the conclusion that the night will hold no terrors for us if we lead proper lives, he admonishes the people to drink moderately and "dice and drable not away money prodigally". His final warning and the moral of the pamphlet are given in the concluding words:<sup>33</sup>

Hee who in the daye doth not good ~~worke~~ enough to  
answere the objections of the night will hardly answeere  
at the day of judgment.

The value of the pamphlet lies in its illustration of the employment of popular literature for common-sense purposes. It shows us a view of Nashe as a sympathetic interpreter of the people and their traditions. The lengthy tale of the gentleman who had experienced visions, and the allusions from history given to illustrate the fact that dreams are not premonitions, enhance the fictional value of the tract while also furthering its moral significance.

But Nashe's merriest effort was reserved for his last; in Lenten Stuffe (1599) he writes in praise of the red herring after a visit to Yarmouth, and his wit runs riot, as he suggests the part which that homely fish played in the history of the world. This piece shows Nashe at his best in the rollicking fantastic style which he had fashioned for himself.

With a comical dedication to Humphrey King, a third-rate author of An Halfe-penny worth of Wit in a Penny-worth of Paper, or the Hermites Tale, which Nashe describes as the "next stile to 'The Strife of Love in a Dreame'", he begins his burlesque. He succeeds in writing many of the lighter types of prose literature in this single pamphlet.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Vol. III, p. 282.

In his introduction he relates his difficulties of a literary and financial nature which caused him to leave London; but since the people of Yarmouth were very hospitable to him, he has written the present pamphlet in a mood of thanksgiving. Then he recounts the early history of that town in a fine spirit of pageantry, trumpeting its origin and development "as I have scrapped out of worm-eaten Parchments". With the observation that the red herring is the one who hath "raised and begot all this beauty" he initiates his readers into the spirit of the extravaganza. A specimen of burlesque encomium follows, such as the Romans, Italians and especially the German anti-Grobianists had made popular, working up an eulogy on the herring fisheries, not forgetting their services to Lent.<sup>34</sup>

Evidences of the unbridling of wit are numerous; his praise for the herring knows no bounds. His lack of respect for fact, and love of unrestrained humor shine forth in the following:<sup>35</sup>

A chollericke parcell of food it is, that who so ties himselfe to racke and manger to for five summers; and five winters; he shall beget a child that will be a souldiour and a commander before hee hath cast his first teeth, and an Alexander, a Julius Caesar, a Scanderbega Barbarossa he will prove ere he aspire to thirtie.

This same spirit rules the latter half of the pamphlet as Nashe wittily parodies the legends of antiquity and adapts them to the glorification of this homely fish. How the fable of Midas who turned everything to gold originated from the fact that he ate a red herring; How King Dionysius, a good

<sup>34</sup> Routh, Harold V., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 375.

<sup>35</sup> Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols., Vol. V, p. 256.



wise fellow, "stept up to a herring" enshrined in the temple as a god, and devoured it; but it prospered not with him for shortly after he was "torn from his throne" and glad to play the "Schoolmaster at Corinth". How Hero and Leander were converted into fish, the maiden to a Cadwallader herring, the youth to a ling, and the old nurse into the mustard, their "waiting-maid", who accompanies them to the table. How the herring was made king of all fishes and ever since wears a coronet on his head, and is escorted by an army. How the fish was camelionized from white to red, sold to Pope Vigilius for three hundred ducats, made into a casket where the head of the Church kept his most precious jewels, and in mitigation of the embers "whereon he was singed" ember weeks were ordained.

But besides a sense of the romance of history, and an ingenious appropriation of classical lore, there is an unmistakable love for the sea and sympathy with the rough, simple life of seamen, as he complains that the ancient poets didn't give the fishermen or sea a good word". In this, his last effort we visualize not the sarcastic nor the moralistic author, but Nashe in his subdued, unrestrained manner as dispenser of wit.

Although one sympathizes with his problems, the reader can not refrain from loss of patience as he follows the author while he abruptly pitches from one attack to another in the course of the telling of a single anecdote. His polemical violence, his carelessness of style, and his feverish unrest may take away from the vigor and humanness of his work. His value to his age and his significance to students lie in the graphic pictures of tavern life and city life which he has painted, always with a sympathy, and in a manner in which arrogance and pretence find no place. His vocabulary and his exuber-

ance, his sarcasm striking like lightning, his pointed attacks against hypocrisy, respectable roguery, foolish affectations, and silly superstitions—all show Nashe at his best and earn for him the title of one of the leading realists of his time.

But, if the Elizabethan middle-class liked to read of rogues and rascals, and enjoyed sarcastic attacks made on others, they also took a delight in tales of honest tradesman-life, where they could see their own virtues upheld and the vices that they disliked condemned. The greatest contributor to this type of fiction is Thomas Deloney, himself a skilled artisan (a weaver), who wrote always from the tradesman's point of view. His tales range from pure romance (but always romance in some way connected with trade) to the realistic portrayal of apprentices and their masters. His style is simple and homely, and he manages to catch the flavor, the spirit, and the zest of life about him. Yet, his stories are filled with a vast deal of prudential morality appealing to the love of the didactic in his readers, who could see the ideals of the middle class exalted in his tales.

These stories possess considerable interest in themselves, no less for their attractive narrative, their humor and coloring, than for the fact that they help to fill in that picture of contemporary life, which had been outlined only in part, by the other writers.<sup>36</sup> While Elizabethan prose fiction had, hitherto, been mainly concerned with the wit and romance of rogues and gallants, Deloney produced stories of men who looked on society as something worth adding to, men up the "ladder of life", who were always striving to be successful.

<sup>36</sup> Atkins, J. W. H., "Elizabethan Prose Fiction", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, p. 418.

The recorded facts of Deloney's life are very scanty. His earliest venture appears to have been A Declaration made by the Archbishop of Cullen upon the Deede of his Mariage (1583), and Kempe in April, 1600, refers to him as having just died.<sup>37</sup> Thus his working literary life lasted about seventeen years, but it is impossible to give even a rough guess at the date of his birth, although 1543 has been suggested. He appears to have drifted into literature from the more substantial occupation of silk-weaving, and his novels show the most intimate acquaintance with London life, but Nashe's epithet "the Balletting Silke Weaver of Norwich" seems to point to that town as the place of his birth.<sup>38</sup>

His novels show the closest acquaintance with the life of traveling craftsmen, with the legends, customs, and topography of certain districts, and especially those round which the Elizabethan textile industries were centered, an acquaintance which could scarcely have been gained except by personal experience. Familiar with local gossip and tradition, and with a mind eagerly absorbent of such printend literature as came within his reach, he found the sources of his stories everywhere, but their characterization and color are the accurate reflection of Elizabethan life in Cheapside and Westminster, among the cobblers of Whitehall and the drapers of Candleweek Street.<sup>39</sup> The difference in the subjects and methods of his work from those of contemporary "novelists" is perhaps chiefly explained by the circumstances of his life and by the audience he addressed. He belonged to no circle of university wits,

<sup>37</sup> Mann, Francis O., (editor), The Works of Thomas Deloney, Intro., p. vii.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. vii.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. xxvii.

and he aimed not at fine writing but profitable story-telling.

His three prose narratives are built upon a common plan; a framework is constructed out of historical or legendary material, and into this are then worked bourgeois descriptions of contemporary life; each narrative is devoted to the glorification of a craft, and the craft is glorified either by relating the story of some successful captain of industry or by glorifying in the less tangible forms of its early patrons.

Jacke of Newberie, registered March 7, 1596-7, perpetuates the fame of a wealthy Berkshire weaver, John Winchcomb (1470-1514), though the history it contains is merely traditional. Deloney composes a sort of popular biography in eleven chapters, the rise of a successful tradesman; who starts life as an apprentice, marries his master's widow, and becomes the head of a thriving business. Then since the tradesman liked to imagine himself appreciated by royalty, Deloney has Jacke, the "poor clothier", raise a hundred men for war at Flodden Field, equipping them at his own expense. Later when Henry VIII is entertained in Jacke's house and offers the weaver knighthood, who refuses since he prefers to remain a clothier and live with his workmen.

The story takes us into the great weaver's shop with its two hundred looms, each worked by one man with a boy to help him, one hundred women carders and two hundred fifty children who pick the wool, the fifty shearers, the eighty rovers, and the twenty fullers. All these items are more included to latter the vanity of the tradesman.

We have the usual digressions and comic interlude. The widow's wooing, the hero's fifteen pictures with their didactic intention, the practical jokes played upon the king's jester, Will Sommers, and an Italian merchant, Master

Bendicke, and the revenge of the servants on the gossip, are all characteristic of Deloney's vein of humor.

The Gentle Craft, licensed in 1597, consists of a series of tales, dedicated to the shoemaking cult. It celebrates the history and achievements of the shoemakers, beginning with the legendary story of St. Hugh and St. Winifred. This story told in a romantic way, aiming at Euphuistic effects, relates the misfortunes of Hugh and Winifred who are condemned to die as Christians. The terrors of Hugh's travels to the continent, the imprisonment of Winifred, Hugh's life as a shoemaker, and the kindness of his brethren during his incarceration are portrayed as steps leading up to the final agony of the lovers. Winifred is bled to death, her blood being tempered with poison, before Hugh is commanded to drink it.

The next tale of Crispine and Crispianus, sons of the Queen of Logria who were persecuted by the Emperor Maximian, whose daughter through an odd chain of circumstances Crispine later marries, is told in this same manner, aiming at romantic effects.

But the third story Simon Eyre moves into the realm of the actual and relates the career of the philanthropic founder of Leandenhall, who, from a shoemaker's apprentice became Lord Mayor, through the counsel of his wife, who advised him to purchase a shipment of linen from a shipwrecked owner, thereby assuring his success. A comic underplot runs through the main story, in which John, a Frenchman, and Haunce, a Dutchman, clumsily intrigue in broken English for the hand of a serving maid; and this forms an excellent counterpart to Simon's stately progress through ceremonies and banquets. The events of this story are placed in the reign of Henry VI.

The principal figure in the next story, Richard Casteler, is Long Meg of Westminster, a serving maid, whose rattling deeds of 1540 had become the subject of both ballad and pamphlet.<sup>40</sup> The story consists of a series of attempts made by Meg and her rival, Gillian, to win the hero apprentice, who in the end marries a Dutch maiden, forcing Margaret to become a laundress to the king's army since she charms no one.

The next anecdote, Master Peachey and his Men, gives a breezy account of the cudgelling administered by the sturdy master shoemaker to certain insolent court bullies, Stutely and Strangwidge; and then goes on to describe the rebuff experienced at the hands of a widow by the journeyman, Tom Drum. Deloney's democratic spirit is revealed not only in these episodes of conflict between the courtier and the citizen, but also in his hearty enjoyment of such jolly, raffish characters as Tom Drum.

The final episode in The Gentle Craft is a variation of one of Deloney's pet themes, the bankrupt merchant rebuffed by those who had courted him in the days of prosperity. The shoemaker hero is an oddity known as the Green King. Reaching poverty as a result of wasteful expenses, he goes abroad to repair his fortunes. But when he returns his debts have already been paid by his wife, who turns on her faithless friends that once more are willing to shower attentions on her, now that she is prosperous.

As source material for The Gentle Craft, Deloney used The Golden Legend for the tales of olden times; Grafton and Holinshed's Chronicles supplied some

---

<sup>40</sup> Atkins, J. W. H., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 419.

historical details for the others, while more material came from local tradition.<sup>41</sup> But it is Deloney's thorough knowledge of Westminster and the city, the streets, shops, taverns, and the manners and customs of the tradesmen and their apprentices, and the women folk, from the stately city dame to the ale-house wench, that gives life and color to this patchwork of stories.

Thomas of Reading or The Sixe Worthie Yeoman of the West was not entered in the Stationers' Registers but the approximate date seems to be 1598 or 1599. This "novel" is written to the honor and glory of the clothiers' craft, designed to portray their honorable estate under Henry I. Thomas Cole, one of the characters, is an offspring of tradition, but the other five: Gray of Gloucester, Sutton of Salisburie, Fitzallen of Worcester, Tom Dove of Excester, and Simon of South-hampton are no more historical than the alliterative aptness of their names would lead one to expect.<sup>42</sup> Deloney freely invented these characters of his own, around which he arranged a history of the clothing trade, drawn chiefly from tradition but illustrated by stories of his own invention or selection.

To the main incidents in the lives of the six master clothiers are added much humorous and descriptive matter centering about inn scenes and gossiping wives, as well as a tragic love-story concerning Duke Robert and the fabulous daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury, constructed as a romance of the conventional Elizabethan kind. In the death of Thomas Cole, Deloney works up a traditional story to a fine point of climax. But there is no attempt at his-

---

<sup>41</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 179.

<sup>42</sup>Mann, Francis O., (editor), op. cit., p. 548.

torical verisimilitude, for in describing his personages the author is obviously sketching Elizabethans. But in this, his last work, Deloney deserves the title of novelist more than in either of the others, for, although the work evolves out of the same kind of material, it is superior in construction, the other two books being only strings of episodes or aggregates of detachable stories.

Deloney's occasional success in the use of dramatic effect; his liking for a sub-plot or subordinate story to diversify interest and connect a rambling series of incidents and racy characterizations into something like a sustained narrative; and, above all, his pungent and life-like dialogue indicate that he had made an intelligent study of the methods employed on the contemporary stage.<sup>43</sup>

Deloney owes little to Greene, Nashe, or other contemporaries. He was not a puritan or satirist and did not concern himself with ugly aspects of the world. He absorbs the current jest-books which were already foretelling the decay of the jester, and it is in this way that he reflects, as does no other of his contemporaries, certain transitions which were taking place in Elizabethan society and art. The jest-book of itself tended toward characterization and biography, but in dealing with the heroes of weaving and cobbling, and elaborating the more or less commonly known circumstances of their lives, Deloney develops this tendency further; and this mingling of traditional history and the matter of the jest-book results in the creation of a long row of distinguishable characters, Richard Casteler, Simon Eyre, and John Winchcombe,

---

<sup>43</sup>Baker, Ernest A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 191.



who, unlike the heroes of the early jest-books, really dominate the situation and occupy the real interest.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the supposed date of events recounted, they present a faithful mirror of life and manners to the classes who read them. The plebeian hero frankly impersonating democratic ideas and sentiments was already a household figure, and the historical color was of the inaccurate but familiar kind learned from tradition.

Deloney's value lies in his descriptions of the bourgeois life of Elizabethan times, given with a spirit and wealth of detail to be found in no other author; he has described for us a phase of society which most contemporary literature chose to overlook contemptuously. His limitations are those of a pioneer; one must not look for cunning structure, any more than for analysis of motive or character development. He is plying a craft as yet unformed; he uses a big brush to paint what lay before him and he is successful in presenting a broad picture of his age.<sup>45</sup>

One more writer of this time deserves our attention. Thomas Dekker (1570-1641), apart from his dramatic work, stands alone in this period. He is remarkable not as a satirist but as the first great literary artist of London street life.<sup>46</sup> We have already discussed his contribution in connection with conny-catching in The Belman of London (1608), but in the following year he produced an ironical book of manners entitled The Guls Hornebooke, while engaged on a translation of Dedekind's Grobianus.

<sup>44</sup>Mann, Francis O., (editor), op. cit., Intro., p. xxx.

<sup>45</sup>Atkins, J. W. H., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 423.

<sup>46</sup>Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, p. 401.

The current qualities of German satire, the love of irony, and the humorous relish for foul things, help to explain the course assumed by the special satire of Grobianism. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, it struck a vein which in its precise form had never been worked before—the inverted precept.<sup>47</sup> A few years later appeared the Narrenschiff with its notable chapter on the "Grobe Narren". The "new Saint" was speedily installed among the standing figures of satire. A little tract of seven pages called Grobianus Tischzucht by Von W. S. Wilkefuge (1538) consists of sixteen articles for the regulation of the new brotherhood, with Grobianus as abbot at its head and with membership open to every repudiator of good manners. This pamphlet is chiefly remarkable as a precursor of the more famous book of Dedekind.

Eleven years after the Tischzucht, in 1549, Dedekind's Grobianus appeared. It carries us through all the stages of the Grobian's day; his mid-day rising, his simple toilette, his table, every phase of which is exhaustively reviewed.<sup>48</sup> But the author being outshone by one of his translators, Kaspar Scheidt, in 1551, published an enlarged second edition of his own book, in which he adopted a large number of his translator's suggestions. This, he called Grobianus et Grobiana.

To England this work contributed a new word, a new method, and to some extent a new subject of social satire. The satire of bad manners was still an essentially, and the satire by ironical precept a wholly, unworked vein when in 1605 the English version of Dedekind gave an example of both.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Herford, Charles H., Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century, p. 382.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 389.

But the combination of brutal manners and slovenly habits was scarcely normal in the England of James I and Elizabeth. The London gallant was noted for excessive attention to his person and for ostentatious attire, not for dirt and slovenliness. The fault of his manners lay in his affectation and gentility rather than in his churlishness. Therefore, Dekker conceived the idea of turning the German's old-fashioned satire on the boorishness suggestive of an *Eulenspiegel* into a satire pasquil on the modern English type. The correspondence is rather in general tone than in detail, though there are many borrowings, especially in the early part of the book.

The Gull's Hornebooke (1609) was the result of a compromise. In his "Epistle to the Reader" Dekker points this out. He tells us:<sup>50</sup>

This tree of Gulls was planted long since; but, not taking root, could never bear till now. It hath a relish of Grobianism, and tastes very strongly of it in the beginning: the reason thereof is, that, having translated many books of that into English verse, and not greatly liking the subject, I altered the shape, and of a Dutchman fashioned a mere Englishman.

And this English version of the Dutch Grobian is the common Fop. Between the two characters, the whole book fluctuates.

The opening chapter tastes very strongly of the Grobian. The old and the new world are contrasted in apparel and diet. The second and third chapters continue with this same idea, closely following Grobianus.<sup>51</sup> But in the fourth chapter, the portrait begins decisively to change character, and a new subject emerges, of totally unlike habits and ideas—a most fanatical devotee of the latest fashion. The fashionable promenade is the subject of a series

<sup>50</sup> McKerrow, R. B., (editor), The Gull's Hornbook by Thomas Dekker, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Appendices I, p. 115.

of regulations. Dekker warns his gallant to tip his hat only to those "newer in fashion than you" and to walk in the middle aisle of Paul's at designated times. In the fifth chapter, "How a Gallant should behave himself in an Ordinary", and the sixth, "In a Playhouse", the common link between the two characters at length comes clearly into view. After riding to the dearest ordinary, reaching there some "half hour after eleven", the Fop is "to eat impudently, for that is most gentlemanlike". Then, at the play, follows the familiar picture of the loungers on the stage, ostentatiously late in arriving "laughing aloud in the midst of the most serious and saddest scene of the terriblest tragedy". The two final chapters instruct the gallant in this same type of behavior in a tavern and in his passage through the city late at night.

Grobianism differs from the picaresque tale, so popular at this time, by the absence of a story connecting the various scenes, but it resembles it in the opportunity it affords for describing a variety of characters and places. In the same fashion as we followed the picaro in his peregrinations, we follow the gallant from his rooms to his ordinary, and from St. Paul's to the play.<sup>52</sup>

Dekker becomes more clearly the follower of the typical middle-class spirit in his merry comedy, The Shoemaker's Holiday, or The Gentle Craft (1600) in which the life of Simon Eyre as it appeared in Deloney's The Gentle Craft becomes the core around which the whole play revolves. In twenty scenes, we are presented with the jolly shoemakers as they enjoy themselves in Eyre's house, where Rowland Lacy, disguised as the Dutch shoemaker Hans, successfully

<sup>52</sup> Jusserand, Jean J., The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, p. 339.

carries out his plot to marry Rose Otley, daughter of the Lord Mayor of London.

In Philip Massinger's play, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, (pl. 1625) we notice this same catering to the desires of the people, an innovation in drama. When Sir Giles Overreach, the most extortionate of usurers, has ruined his nephew, the man schemes to get even by feigning a match with the wealthy Lady Allworth. She allows her name only out of kindness, and the wretched Sir Giles is further cozened by his tool and secret enemy Marrall, who in drawing up the deed uses fading ink. His devices for luring victims come to naught, his daughter's marriage miscarries, and in the end Sir Giles becomes insane as a result of his misfortunes.

Massinger's moral emphasis is so great that the inherent roguery is much obscured in the reprobation of villainy.

The bourgeois' taste for tales, which without too great a burden of morality taught lessons of thrift, industry, and sobriety, is exemplified in Wellborn's desire to be sent in charge of soldiers in order to acquire better training. He receives his land once again after his repentance, and we are left with the feeling that he will now become ambitious and lead a thoroughly successful life, guiding his conduct according to the ethical rules of the middle-class.

One quality more obvious in Elizabethan fiction than in our modern novels is this didactic element which occupies such a conspicuous place in the literature appealing to the bourgeoisie intent upon improvement. Some of the most popular fiction professes to improve the mind, help the purse, and save the soul.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION: REALISM AS AN ELEMENT IN THE NEW ART OF THE NOVEL

Popular literature was revived in Defoe; the lower middle classes, and orders still humbler, saw their lives and circumstances, their interests and ideals represented with a sympathy and a seriousness that had hitherto been accorded only to their betters in the social scale. Their great-grandfathers had narrowly escaped this good fortune. Deloney, as we have seen, had almost succeeded in establishing the bourgeois novel, but the whole strength of puritanism had been in opposition; the time had not yet come for literature and the democratic spirit to be welded. But Defoe, writing in the eighteenth century, brought into the novel the popular vernacular strain of Greene as well as Deloney, as he lay open the lives of his rogues and harlots, describing with the minutest of detail, their very actions and their surroundings--in a way almost approximating our present day naturalism.

Between the age of Elizabeth, the period of our study, and the age of Anne and the Georges there is in the history of the novel a long period of semi-stagnation. The seventeenth century added very little, apart from an exaggerated heroism, to the art of the novel. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century English prose and the English reader alike were ready, and the first great English novels appeared.

The history of the English novel has its roots in realism, and the first great master of realism in English prose fiction is Daniel Defoe(1661-1731).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dawson, W. J., and C. W., "The Growth and Technique of the English Novel" The Great English Novelists, p. 5. 137

But more than a century earlier Robert Greene had given him his precedent both as to literary style and subject matter, in the autobiographical pamphlets which he wrote.<sup>2</sup> These, consisting of exposures of contemporary life in London, were written with the bitterness of first hand knowledge as the author dealt with the practices of swindlers and the poverty-inspired shifts of the underdog. His repentances are ungarnished self-confessions of his own contrivances to live. Here, in the use made of autobiography and the depiction of contemporary types and manners, were struck the keynotes of Moll Flanders and Roxana, those novels of Defoe depicting a new type of sociological subject matter.

Defoe set out to tell exciting stories, but the result of his immense knowledge of life in all its shapes, and of the untiring research he undertook when he told a story of times past, is that his books are not only stories of doings and experiences but presentiments of life in its fullness.<sup>3</sup> For the more perfect effecting of his purpose, Defoe cast his fictions in the narrative form of the autobiographic and stored them with petty details to give to them the illusion of verisimilitude. No story, indeed, whether true or fictitious, has ever been told with such a combination of minute and inexhaustible realism and of the curiosity that keeps the mind on the stretch to the very end, as Robinson Crusoe.<sup>4</sup> The statistical details of the bills in Moll Flanders and the motivation of all the characters of Defoe by economic security indicate the presence of the former commercialism and bourgeois spirit of Thomas Deloney.

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Baker, E. A., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Vol. III, p. 145.

However, realistic as Defoe's method was, prose fiction in his hands did not develop the plot interest. In Fielding, his successor in realism, the autobiographic method is superseded by the author's writing in the third person from the omniscient point of view; and although the realism of Defoe is preserved, it is modified and made subservient to the plot. Realism with Fielding takes the generous form of an epic depiction of contemporary men and manners.<sup>5</sup> His social sympathies are invariably with the serving and down-trodden class; and rarely does he lose an opportunity of revealing them as superior to their masters. Fielding, as a writer, poured ridicule and contempt on meanness, on hypocrisy, on vanity, and on selfishness that causes the innocent to suffer. He thus fixed the form of a new branch of literature, by bringing to his task a sterling commonsense and by giving to the novel a virile purpose in making it the instrument of social satire.

From his day to ours, the novel has been, and probably will continue to be, a vehicle for the promulgation of ideas, an instrument for the correction of manners, and a mirror in which are reflected the fads, foibles, hypocrisies, and shams of the age. There has been, it is true, a great advance in this special type of literature, but yet the germ of all the innovations is to be found in the novels of the early eighteenth century, which are an outgrowth of the realistic tendencies of Greene, Nashe, and Deloney as they lay open the hypocrisies of their age, or as they painted in true colors the canvases of contemporary life about them, in a language understood by the middle-class audience for whom they wrote.

---

<sup>5</sup>Dawson, W. J., and C. W., op. cit., p. 13.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- Dekker, Thomas, "The Shoemaker's Holiday, or The Gentle Craft" in The Harvard Classics (edited by Charles W. Eliot), Vol. II, (Elizabethan Drama), P. F. Collier and Son, New York, 1910, pp. 447-515.
- Furnivall, Frederick J., (editor), "Jyl of Breyntford's Testament" by Robert Copland in Jyl of Breyntford's Testament, By Robert Copland, Boke-Prynter The Wyll of the Devyll, and his Last Testament, A Talk of Ten Wives on their Husbands' Ware, A Balade or Two by Chaucer, and Other Short Pieces, (Printed for Private Circulation), London, 1871, pp. 7-19.
- Furnivall, Frederick J., (editor), "The Wyll of the Devyll and Last Testament" by Humphrey Powell in Jyl of Breyntford's Testament, by Robert Copland, Boke-Prynter, The Wyll of the Devyll and his Last Testament, A Talk of Ten Wives on their Husbands' Ware, A Balade or Two by Chaucer, and Other Short Pieces, (Printed for Private Circulation), London, 1871, pp. 20-28.
- Grosart, Alexander B., (editor), "The Belman of London" in The Non-dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, (5 vols.) London and Aylesbury, (Printed for Private Circulation), 1884-1886, Vol. III.
- Grosart, Alexander B., (editor), "The Defence of Conny-Catching" (anon) in The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, (15 vols) The Huth Library, London, (For private circulation), 1881-1886, Vol. XI, pp. 39-104.
- Grosart, Alexander B., (editor), The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, (15 vols.), The Huth Library, London, (For private circulation), 1881-1886, Vols. I, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII.
- Grosart, A. B., (editor), The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, (6 vols.), The Huth Library, London, (Printed for Private Circulation Only), 1883-1885, Vols. I, II, III, IV, V.
- Halliwell, James Orchard, (editor), "Colyn Blowbal's Testament" in Nugae Poeticae, London: John Russell Smith, 1844, pp. 1-12.
- Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), "A Hundred Mery Talys" (anon) in Shakespeare Jest-Books (3 vols.), (Old English Jest-Books Series), Vol. I, part I, J. R. Smith, London, 1864, pp. 1-129.
- Hazlitt, William Carew, (editor), "A Lytle and Bryefe Treatyse called The Defence of Women, and especially of English Women, Made Agaynst The Schole House of Women" by Edward More in Early Popular Poetry, Vol. II, John Russell Smith, London, 1864, pp. 95-140.
- Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), "Merie Tales of Skelton" in Shakespeare Jest Books (Old English Jest-Books), Volume II, J. R. Smith, London, 1864, pp. 1-36.

- Hazlitt, W. Carew, (editor), "Mery Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres, Very pleasant to be Readde", Shakespeare Jest-Books, (Old English Jest-Books Series), Vol. I, Part II, John Russell Smith, London, 1864, pp. 1-162.
- Hazlitt, William Carew, (editor), "The Proude Wyves Pater Noster" (anon) in Early Popular Poetry, Vol. II, J. R. Smith, London, 1864, pp. 141-168.
- Hazlitt, William Carew, (editor), "The Schole House of Women" (anon) in Early Popular Poetry, Vol. II, J. R. Smith, London, 1864, pp. 51-93.
- Hazlitt, W. C., (editor), "Scoggin's Jests" in Shakespeare Jest Books, (Old English Jest-Books, Vol. II, pp. 37-161, John Russell Smith, London, 1864.
- Jamieson, Thomas Hill, (editor), The Ship of Fools of Sebastian Brant, translated by Alexander Barclay, 2 vols. Henry Sotheran and Co., London, 1874.
- Lange, Alexis F., (editor), The Gentle Craft, Mayer and Muller, Berlin, 1903.
- Mackenzie, K. R. H., (editor), Master Tyll Owlglass by Thomas Murner, E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1923.
- Mann, Francis O., (editor), The Works of Thomas Deloney, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1912.
- Massinger, Philip, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" in The Harvard Classics (edited by Charles W. Eliot), Vol. II (Elizabethan Drama), P. F. Collier and Son, New York, 1910, pp. 817-899.
- McKerrow, R. B., (editor), The Gull's Hornbook by Thomas Dekker, John W. Luce and Company, Boston, 1907.
- Rimbault, E. F., (editor), "Cock Lorell's Bote", (anon), in Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages, Vol. VI, Printed for the Percy Society by T. Richards, London, 1842.
- Utterson, Edward Vernon, (editor), "The Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous" by Robert Copland in Select Pieces of Early Popular Poetry: Republished Principally from Early Printed Copies in the Black Letter, Vol. II, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1817, pp. 1-50.
- Viles, Edward and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), The Fraternitye of Vacabondes by John Awdeley (Published for the Early English Text Society), N. Trubner and Company, London, 1869, p. 1-11.
- Viles, Edward and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), A Caveat or Warening For Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones, set forth by Thomas Harman, Esquire for the utilite and proffyt of his Naturall Countrey (Published for the Early English Text Society), N. Trubner and Company, London, 1869, pp. 17-91.
- Viles, Edward and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), A Sermon in Praise of Thieves and Thievery, by Parson Haben or Hyberdyne, (Published for the Early English Text Society), N. Trubner and Company, London, 1869, pp. 92-95.
- Viles, Edward and F. J. Furnivall, (editors), The XXV Orders of Knaves, otherwise called A Quarterne of Knaves, confirmed forever by Cocke Lorell by John Awdeley, (Published for the Early English Text Society), N. Trubner And Company, London, 1869, pp. 12-16.

## Secondary Sources

- Atkins, J. W. H., "Elizabethan Prose Fiction" in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1933.
- Aydelotte, Frank "Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds" in Oxford Historical and Literary Studies, (3 vols.), Vol. I, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1913.
- Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. I (The Age of Romance from the Beginnings to the Renaissance), H. F. and G. Witherby, London, 1924.
- Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. II (The Elizabethan Age and After), H. F. and G. Witherby, London, 1929.
- Baker, Ernest A., The History of the English Novel, Vol. III (The Later Romances and the Establishment of Realism), H. F. and G. Witherby, London, 1929.
- Brett-Smith, H. F. B., (editor), The Unfortunate Traveller; or, The Life of Jacke Wilton, by Thomas Nashe, B. Blackwell, Oxford, 1920.
- Burton, Richard, Masters of the English Novel, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909.
- Cazamian, L., "Richardson" in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. X, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913.
- Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, The Literature of Roguery, (2 vols.), Vol. I, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, New York, 1907.
- Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, Romances of Roguery, An Episode in the History of the Novel, in 2 parts, Part I "The Picaresque Novel in Spain", The Macmillan Company, New York, 1899.
- Cheyney, Edward P., An Introduction to the Industrial and Social History of England, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1926.
- Cheyney, Edward P., "Social Changes in England in the Sixteenth Century as Reflected in Contemporary Literature", Publications of the University of Pennsylvania Series in Philology, Literature, and Archaeology, Vol. IV No. 2, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1895.
- Child, Harold, "Fielding and Smollett" in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. X, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913.
- Corbett, W. J., "The Agricultural Revolution: The Cessation of Progress", Social England, by H. D. Traill and J. S. Mann, (editors), Volume II, Section II, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.
- Corbett, W. J., "Agriculture" in Social England, by H. D. Traill and J. S. Mann, (editors), Vol. III, Section I, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1909.
- Cross, W. L., The Development of the English Novel, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1927.
- Cunningham, Ven. Archdeacon, "Early Writings on Politics and Economics" in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.
- Dawson, William J., and Coningsby W. Dawson, "The Growth and Technique of the English Novel", The Great English Novelists, Vol. I, (Lights of Literature), Harper and Brothers, New York, 1911, pp. 1-22.

- Einstein, Lewis, The Italian Renaissance in England, The Columbia University Press, New York, 1927.
- Green, John Richard, A Short History of the English People, A. L. Burt Company, New York, n. d.
- Hallam, Henry, Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 4 vols., Vols. I, II, A. C. Armstrong and Son, New York, 1880.
- Henderson, Philip, (editor), The Unfortunate Traveller; or, The Life of Jacke Wilton, by Thomas Nash, London, The Verona Society, 1930.
- Herford, Charles H., Studies in The Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century, Cambridge: The University Press, 1886.
- Hewins, W. A. S., "The Problem of Pauperism", Social England by H. D. Traill and J. S. Mann, (editors), Vol. III, Section I, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1909.
- Hume, Martin, Spanish Influence on English Literature, E. Nash, London, 1905.
- Jordan, John Clark, Robert Greene, Columbia University Press, New York, 1915.
- Judges, A. V., (editor), The Elizabethan Underworld, George Rutledge and Sons, Ltd., London, 1930.
- Jusserand, Jean J., The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1890.
- Jusserand, J. J., A Literary History of the English People, 3 vols., Vol. II, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1910.
- Koelbing, Arthur, "Barclay and Skelton", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.
- LaCroix, Paul, Science and Literature in the Middle Ages and at the Period of the Renaissance, Bickers and Son, London, 1878.
- Lee, Sidney, The French Renaissance in England; An Account of the Literary Relations of England and France in the Sixteenth Century, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910.
- Legouis, Emile, and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, (2 vols.) Vol. I, (The Middle Ages and the Renaissance) by Emile Legouis, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1926.
- Long, William J., English Literature, Ginn and Company, Chicago, 1909.
- Lovett, Robert Morss and Helen Sard Hughes, The History of the Novel in England, Houghton Mifflin Company, Chicago, 1932.
- Padelford, Frederick Morgan, "Transition English Song Collections" in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. II, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1933.
- Raleigh, Walter, The English Novel; being a Short Sketch of its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of 'Waverley', Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1910.
- Routh, Harold V., "London and the Development of Popular Literature", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.
- Routh, Harold V., "The Progress of Social Literature in Tudor Times", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.

- Saintsbury, George, The English Novel, The Channels of English Literature Series, New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1913.
- Salzman, L. F., England in Tudor Times, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1922.
- Schelling, Felix E., English Literature during the Lifetime of Shakespeare, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1927.
- Stephenson, Henry Thew, The Elizabethan People, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1910.
- Stoddard, Francis Hovey, The Evolution of the English Novel, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1913.
- Swain, Barbara, Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Columbia University Press, New York, 1932.
- Taine, H. A., "The Novelists", History of English Literature, (Chapter VI), Vol. II, New York: Holt and Williams, 1871.
- Thompson, Elbert N. S., Literary Bypaths of the Renaissance, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924.
- Thornbury, George Walter, Shakespeare's England; or, Sketches of our Social History in the Reign of Elizabeth (2 vols.), Vol. I and II, London: Longmans, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1856.
- Tickner, F. W., A Social and Industrial History of England, Longmans, Green and Company, New York, 1929.
- Tucker, T. G., The Foreign Debt of English Literature, George Bell and Sons, London, 1907.
- Underhill, John Garrett, Spanish Literature in the England of the Tudors, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1899.
- Williams, Orlo, Some Great English Novels, Macmillan and Company, Ltd., London, 1926.
- Woolf, Virginia, "Defoe", The Common Reader, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925, pp. 125-135.
- Wright, Louis B., Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1935.